**Healthy Lawns….The Organic Way; November 9, 2011**

**That “perfect” lawn**

* Labor…40 hours of mowing time
* Chemicals…pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers
* Water… accounts for 1/3 of all water use
* Money…a huge industry
* Pollutes…the air and water. CO2/other pollutants from mowers and blowers, run off of nitrogen and phosphorus into lakes and streams, transporting bagged clippings
* May not be safe for children, pets or wildlife
  + Roundup….

**10 Steps to creating a sensible and organic lawn:**

1. **Go cold turkey**…do not use herbicides or pesticides (Grub-X)
2. **Get a soil test**…UMass does it…organic material, pH--most New England soils need lime
3. **Fertilize with an eye-dropper**. Top dress with compost…1/4” in fall/spring
4. **Mow properly**

* 3” high grass shades its own roots and shades out weeds
* Mowing blades sharp
* Leave clippings on lawn…it is not thatch…free fertilizer…decompose easily
* Thatch is caused by shallow watering and overfertilizing. Earthworms reduce thatch
* Do not mow wet grass
* Do not mow more than 1/3 of blade at a time

1. **Grow the right seed**

* blend is best, with fescue and perennial rye
* Overseed regularly, fall is best because weeds are dying. Weeds die out over time as lawn improves

1. **Add clover to the mix**…adds nitrogen to soil, stays green in droughts, doesn’t need frequent mowing, does attract bees
2. **Don’t water**

* Half of all water is lost in evaporation, wind or over-watering
* A dormant lawn during summer’s heat kills grubs
* Water between 4-8 am, only 1/week, 1” at a time
* Browned out in August---comes back in Sept

1. **Shrink your lawn**
2. **Invite good guys to dinner…**

* Hungry birds
* Microbes from compost top dressing. Compost tea not recommended

1. **Aerate in fall**…soil need oxygen and space

**Grubs:**

Top-dress with compost in late June….Jap. beetles don’t like it and won’t lay eggs

Can spread nematodes, but not always effective

Lawns don’t always come back 100% after August hot weather…reseed small areas

**Weeds**

* enjoy yellow and purple
* Use white vinegar right from jug to kill weeds in walkways, driveways and patios