



Lush Lawns for Le\$\$

We Love Lawns. They are part of our image of what home should be and, when healthy, they can provide a personal refuge and a place to play.

Maintaining a healthy lawn is the best way to combat weeds, diseases, and pests. If you find you have to continually add pesticides and fertilizers to your lawn to keep it looking good, this could indicate an underlying problem.

A YardScaping lawn can be healthier, and the bonus is that it is also healthier for your children, pets, your wallet, and the environment.

Fertilizer: more is not necessarily better! The iridescent, emerald-green lawn acquired by overfeeding with fertilizers, especially nitrogen, is actually unhealthy turf that's under stress. In this condition, the lawn is vulnerable to plant diseases, weeds and drought. Maine soils are rich in phosphorus, so phosphorus-free fertilizer is generally all you need for an established lawn.

Pesticides can be toxic if overused or carelessly applied. Pesticides (fungicides, herbicides, and insecticides) are used to control diseases, weeds, and insect pests. The long-term effects on human health from continuous exposure to low levels of chemical pesticides is a subject of ongoing debate.

Weed and Feed is a combination of both pesticides & fertilizers. Because these products are generally applied to the entire lawn, you may be applying unneeded chemicals. For example, there may be areas of the lawn without weeds that don't need pesticides. Or, using weed and feed may result in applying fertilizer at a time of the year when the grass is not growing and the fertilizer won't be absorbed. This can waste money.

What You Can Do—If You Do It Yourself.

- ✓ If you do fertilize your lawn—hold off until late summer—early fall. Between Labor Day and Columbus Day is the best time for the uptake of nutrients so your money will not be wasted.
- ✓ If you currently use weed and feed—consider spot-treating your weeds and then applying your fertilizer separately in late summer—early fall.
- ✓ For additional information about low-impact lawn care alternatives, check out **YardScaping for a Healthy Maine:** www.yardscaping.org

What You Can Do—If You Hire a Lawn Care Company.

- ✓ Ask your provider whether the insect and weed controls are applied on a fixed schedule. If so, they are not the company to hire.
- ✓ Make sure your provider does a soil test before fertilizer is applied.
- ✓ For additional information about selecting a natural, pesticide-free lawn care program, go to <http://www.yardscaping.org/hire.htm> or check out Paul Tukey's *People, Places & Plants* Tips of the Week: <http://www.ppplants.com/resources/tip/04-04-06.html>.

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YardScaping hopes to inspire Maine people to create and maintain healthy landscapes through ecologically based practices that minimize reliance on water, fertilizer, and pesticides. The Maine YardScaping Partnership was formed out of the rising concern among statewide organizations and agencies over the possible pollution caused by yard care chemicals washing away into water bodies, as well as the risks of pesticide exposure to people, pets, and wildlife.