

When You Need a Professional Landscaper:

The NOFA Organic Land Care Program has accredited over 1,000 landscapers to practice organically. There are over 100 accredited landscapers in your area offering organic land care services. All accredited professionals are listed at: www.organiclandcare.net

It's easy! Just click on "AOLCP Search" from the homepage, type in keywords about the services you seek, your town or zip code, or even a landscaper or business' name.



2010 Accreditation Class in Massachusetts

Organic Land Care Education and Accreditation

The Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) / Massachusetts Chapter, Inc. was formed in 1982 to educate and advocate for organic farming and gardening in the state. NOFA/Mass has 1,400 members and supports 15 different projects statewide, including the NOFA Organic Land Care Program. Educational workshops in organic growing are featured at the NOFA Summer Conference, NOFA/Mass Winter Conference, statewide gardening day in April and other extension events. The interstate NOFA Organic Land Care Program was created in 1999. The program's mission is to extend the vision and principles of organic agriculture to the care of landscapes where people carry out their daily lives, via educational courses and publications geared to professionals and homeowners.

For more information:
www.organiclandcare.net



Photo by Dave Hatton, AOLCP

Reducing Toxic Chemical Use: Education, Training, Outreach

The Toxics Use Reduction Institute (TURI) works to reduce toxic chemical use and advance energy and water efficiency, while enhancing the economic competitiveness of local businesses. TURI's Community Program strives to help organizations raise awareness of the hazards of toxic chemical use and introduce safer alternatives within neighborhoods. TURI provides:

- Grants to non-profit organizations & municipalities
- Education, training & outreach on toxics use reduction methods and alternatives
- Resources to assist communities and individuals to reduce toxics

For more information visit: www.turi.org

Why Choose An Organic Lawn?

"Reducing the use of harmful pesticides and synthetic fertilizers on lawns is an area where homeowners can make a direct impact on the health of their families and communities."

-- Joy Onasch, TURI Community Programs Manager

Healthy, Beautiful and Sustainable Organic Lawns

A guide for homeowners



Garden & Photo by Monique Allen, AOLCP, MCLP

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NOFA/Mass: www.nofamass.org

NOFA Organic Land Care Program:
www.organiclandcare.net

TURI: www.turi.org



Photo by Deborah Alexander, AOLCP

A healthy, beautiful, organic lawn is all about the health of the soil.

What is an Organic Lawn?

An organic lawn is a lawn grown without the use of conventional or synthetic products. Implementing an organic lawn requires patience and the desire to work with natural systems. A beautiful and safe organic lawn is all about the health of the soil, whereas chemical applications focus on feeding the grass. In a healthy soil, grass plants thrive, crowd out weeds, suppress disease and encourage beneficial microorganisms to continue replenishing the soil.

Organic Lawn Care:

- Does not use synthetic pesticides, fertilizers or amendments
- Costs less money in the long run because healthy soils produce healthy plants, reducing the need for watering and inputs
- Increases landscape diversity
- Reduces groundwater pollution due to runoff
- Improves the health of the land and the people and pets who live on it

Steps You Can Take for a Healthy, Beautiful, Sustainable Organic Lawn

1. Take a soil test. The UMass Soil Testing Lab can be reached at (413) 545-2311. The test is inexpensive and the results will explain what your soil needs (ex. lime, compost) so you can address its specific soil parameters.

2. Fertilize naturally. Use compost from your own heap, well-aged manure or slow-release organic fertilizers to feed the soil. Topdress with 1/4 inch of compost in fall and spring.

3. Mow high (3" is best) and sharpen your mower blades annually. Cleaning the mower after each use can also help prevent the spread of disease.

4. Leave grass clippings on the lawn. These will decompose and put valuable organic matter back into your soil, thus reducing fertilizer needs.

5. Water wisely with conservation in mind. Water only when your grass shows signs of drought stress and then water deeply. (Put a cup in your sprinkler zone and give your grass about 1 inch of water.)

6. Overseed bare spots in spring and fall. For a new lawn, or a lawn with significant bare patches, add a good quality seed mixture which includes creeping fescue, bluegrass and perennial ryegrass. A small amount of white Dutch clover should be added to the seed mix, or spread over the existing lawn.

7. Visit the NOFA Organic Land Care Program website (www.organiclandcare.net) for helpful homeowner resources: an interactive forum, a homeowners' survey, fact sheets, informative articles, organic lawn tips and a workshop calendar.

Common Problems in Organic Lawns and What to Do:

Weeds in the Lawn? Often weeds are a sign of poor soil. Correct the pH by following soil test recommendations. Crabgrass? Spot treat with corn gluten in early spring (between forsythia and lilac bloom) to prevent seed germination. Dig out dandelions by the roots, or try spot treating with lemon juice mixed with vinegar; areas that are sprayed should be seeded immediately, with compost (mix seed and compost and spread 1/2-inch thick).

Grubs? Brown patches in your lawn, particularly in late summer/early fall, might mean you have a grub problem. Beneficial nematodes can be applied, but read directions carefully and consider calling a NOFA Accredited Organic Land Care Professional for assistance in diagnosing and treating your lawn's specific grub problems.

Environmental Organizations and Additional Resources:

Ayer Conservation Commission:
www.ayer.ma.us or (978) 772-8218

Ayer Greenway Committee:
www.ayer.ma.us/greenway

Nashua River Watershed Association:
www.nashuariverwatershed.org

People of Ayer Concerned About the Environment (PACE):
www.ayer.ma.us/community/volunteering or call (978) 772-2528



Photo by Charles Sherzi Jr., AOLCP