



TOWN OF GRAND VALLEY: LAWN CARE AND GARDENING METHODS FOR NEW RESIDENTS

“Our vision is to be the safest, most vibrant community anywhere with endless possibilities”

Importance of proper Lawn Care

New residents to Grand Valley may be unaware of the connection between basic lawn and garden maintenance and water pollution. In fact, the largest source of water pollution in local rivers and creeks is caused by the runoff of chemicals from lawns and gardens. These chemicals, which include fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, are transported by rainwater from your lawn into ditches, drains and even directly into creeks. This can have detrimental effects on local water sources and the environment. This is why proper lawn care is an important aspect of owning your new home. Proper lawn care will allow residents to minimize their use of chemical products and in effect, their impact on the environment.

A few tips and guidelines to help keep your lawn maintained properly:

- Use pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers sparingly and follow product instructions carefully. Avoid use if rain is expected and Do not apply near bodies of water.
- Make sure to store chemical products properly inside and out of the rain.
- Properly dispose of chemical products at ‘Household Hazardous Waste and Electronic Goods Recycling Days’ offered by the County of Dufferin.
- Try to use products that are labeled nontoxic, biodegradable or water-soluble.
- ‘Go Green’ by using natural fertilizers and natural insect repellents.
- Makes sure to not over irrigate – this can cause sediment, herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers to wash into ditches, drains or creeks.
- Keep your lawn thick and healthy by regularly adding grass seed.
- Compost yard waste or bag and dispose using solid waste collection programs.
- Many lawns already have adequate amounts of phosphorus in their soil, test your lawn before buying fertilizer containing phosphorus.
- Hand-picking pests and putting barriers around plants are simple, low-tech strategies to keep your garden free of infestation.
- Group garden plants according to water needs.
- Divert roof downspouts and other stormwater away from paved surfaces and onto grass or into ‘rain gardens’.
- Pick up animal wastes and properly dispose of it in garbage.

Living Fence

The living fence is intended to naturalize and mature over time to provide privacy screening for residents. The living fence is comprised of a continuous non-pierced arrangement of trees and shrubs, including existing trees and/or a board-on-board fence. Please do not add or remove plants to the living fence.

The Ontario Cosmetic Pesticides Ban

On April 22nd 2009, the provincial government enacted the Ontario Cosmetic Pesticides Ban, making the sale and use of many herbicides, fungicides and insecticides illegal. More than 90 pesticide ingredients have also been banned, including all Class 9 products, according to the Ontario government's classification system. Class 9 includes the many ingredients that are quite common in consumer pesticide products. A comprehensive list of all Class 9 pesticide ingredients can be found by visiting: www.ene.gov.on.ca/stdprodconsume/groups/lr/@ene/@category/@pesticides/documents/natedocs/stdprod_080203.pdf. These products and ingredients are all banned from cosmetic use. Commercial or restricted products containing these ingredients, however, may still be used by farmers or licensed exterminators as exceptions under the ban.

A Lawn Without Pesticides: Natural Alternatives for Proper Lawn Care

While many of the herbicides, fungicides and insecticides that homeowners used to depend on for lawn care are now unavailable, there are multiple natural yet effective alternatives that can be put to good use. (1) Simply using proper mowing, aeration, watering, fertilization, and seeding techniques produces a healthy, thick lawn that can discourage weeds and will be better able to resist insect infestations. Do remember, however, that (2) these insects are a natural part of your lawn. Many of these insects are quite beneficial, and can help maintain the health of your garden, attract birds, pollinate plants and reduce unwanted pests. (3) When starting your lawn, make sure to plant grass that is naturally suited to your area. Every type of grass is unique, meaning that they differ in the type of climate that they prefer, the amount of water and nutrients needed and the degree of sunlight and wear they can withstand. (4) Test your soil to determine the amount of nutrients needed and to detect problems. (5) Make sure to regularly inspect your lawn and garden for infestation, weeds or any other problems. (6) Mow your lawn regularly, but don't cut it too short. When lawns are cut too short, surface roots become exposed, soil dries out faster and surface aeration is reduced. (7) Control thatch build-up. Grass roots are unable to absorb enough water and nutrients when there is an overabundance of thatch. Proper aeration can allow certain microorganisms to rise to the surface that will eat much of the thatch. (8) Feed your lawn naturally. Leave your lawn clippings on the lawn after you mow – they make an ideal fertilizer, releasing nitrogen in the soil as they break down.

Lower-Risk Pesticides

Under the ban, homeowners are still allowed to use Class 5, 6, or 7 products within their home or to protect their health and safety by controlling pests such as wasps, mosquitos, plants that are poisonous to the touch, fleas or ticks that bite pets, indoor pests and rodents that may spread disease. Outside the home, certain 'lower risk' pesticides and biopesticides are still allowed for the management of weeds, insects and plant diseases. These products have a low toxicity to humans, a minimal impact on the environment and are non-toxic in the controlling of pests. These products are listed as Class 5 and 6. A complete list of all Class 5 products can be found at www.ene.gov.on.ca/stdprodconsume/groups/lr/@ene/@category/@pesticides/documents/nativedocs/stdprod_080198.pdf and a list of Class 6 products can be found at www.ene.gov.on.ca/stdprodconsume/groups/lr/@ene/@category/@pesticides/documents/nativedocs/stdprod_080200.pdf. While these products are still available for use, it is highly recommended that they be used sparingly.

A Greener Community

The use of natural methods of lawn care is the way forward for new Grand Valley residents. By following the simple yet effective guidelines for proper care you can maintain a quality lawn without making environmental sacrifices. Your lawn, as well as the community, the local creeks and rivers and the local wildlife will all thank you.