3 Simple Steps to Create a Lawn That's Healthy for Kids, Pets, Wildlife and Water Quality

This time of year many folks are making plans for their lawn. Maybe you're planning a trip to the store to get lawn supplies. Or a call to a lawn care company that promises a lush, green carpet in your yard. Before you take action, consider the following.

One lawn is only a small piece of land, but when you add up all the lawns across the country they cover an area the size of the State of Ohio. How we manage our lawns affects the health of our children, pets, wildlife and water quality. Here are three simple steps for creating a lawn that's healthy for all.

Step 1: Avoid pesticide use

Avoid using pesticides because they are dangerous for children, pets and other wildlife. In addition, these harmful chemicals can be tracked into the house or leach into the groundwater. Pesticides include insecticides, fungicides, herbicides and are in weed and feed products.

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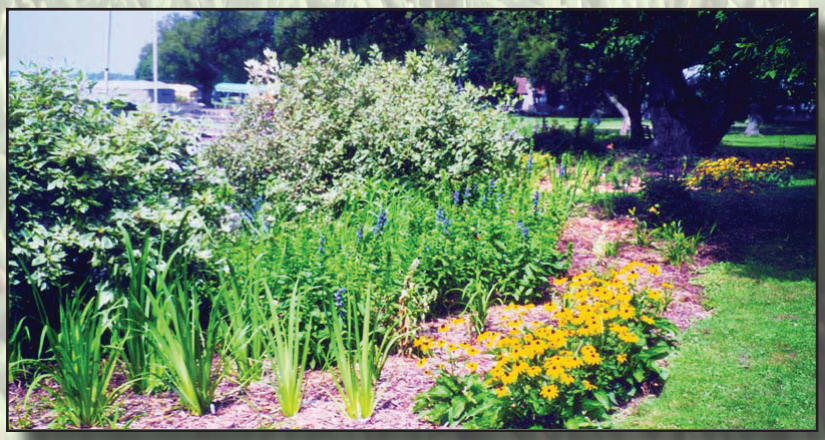
Step 2: Choose zero-phosphorus fertilizer

Before you fertilize, test your soil and see what it really needs. If you must fertilize, avoid fertilizers that contain phosphorus. Remember, it's phosphorous that accelerates algae growth in our lakes and rivers. Whether you live next to water or not, the runoff from your lawn can make its way to the groundwater or local lake or stream. Consider this – one pound of phosphorous in runoff can result in 500 pounds of algae growth! If you follow the instructions on a bag of fertilizer containing phosphorus, you may be adding over 50 pounds of phosphorus to a half-acre lot each year. The middle number on a fertilizer bag indicates the amount of phosphorus it contains.

Step 3: Consider downsizing your lawn

Only mow where you go. If the only time a person walks on a particular piece of lawn is when you mow it, why bother? Mow areas that you use: under hammocks, picnic tables, play areas and the like. Golf course-type lawns are missing many of the benefits that more interesting yards can provide. By planting more trees and shrubs, wildflowers and tall grasses you provide fun play areas for kids as well as nesting spots and food for songbirds, butterflies and other wildlife. In addition, a smaller lawn takes less time to mow, uses less gas and provides more time for rest and relaxation.



Caring for children, pets, birds, drinking water, lakes and streams begins in our own backyards.

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