

# Organic Lawn Care Products

By Tara Schatz

## Healthy soil

- Test the pH of your soil.** Grass grows best in soil that is slightly alkaline, with reading on the pH scale of about 6.5 to 7. You can buy pH test kits at your local garden center or home improvement store.
- Adjust the pH.** If your pH test reveals a reading that is below 6.5, you will want to spread a layer of garden lime over your entire lawn using a spreader. If the reading is above 7, you should spread a layer of elemental sulfur.
- Fertilize your lawn.** Use a balanced, organic fertilizer twice a year for best results. Apply the first application when the grass starts greening up in the spring. Apply the second application in early fall. To avoid burning your grass, follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully and consider using a slow-release fertilizer.
- Apply a layer of compost.** A ½ inch layer of compost spread across your whole lawn is like an instant boost of energy for healthy growth. You can apply homemade or store-bought compost in conjunction with your organic fertilizer application.

## Healthy growth

- Tackle weeds.** If you have a few weeds in your lawn, take heart. They actually add a bit of biodiversity to an otherwise stagnant habitat. If weeds are plentiful, killing your grass, or starting to take over, an organic weed-killer should do the trick. These organic lawn care products are safe for humans and pets, and only kill broad-leaved plants, leaving your lush lawn behind.
- Plant grass seed to cover bald spots.** If you've got bare dirt in your lawn, gently loosen the soil with a rake and plant a thick layer of perennial grass seed. Cover this with some compost and keep the area moist. In a matter of days you will have tiny sprouts. In a few weeks, your bare spots will have disappeared.
- Water sparingly.** Watering your lawn too much will actually inhibit healthy growth by acting as a crutch for your lawn. Only water during dry spells, and be sure to water deeply to penetrate the root tips.
- Check for signs of pests.** Many critters can live happily in your lawn without causing damage. There are also plenty of nuisance pets that love lawns, and a few can wreak havoc if not controlled. If you suspect that insects are damaging your lawn, be proactive.
  - Take pictures of the damage and the insect if you can find it.
  - Research the pest using the internet, or bring in your damaged grass or an insect specimen to your local nursery. Plant and garden experts will help you with pest identification.
  - Once you've identified your nuisance critter, apply an organic pesticide that will target the pest in question.
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- Mowing
  - Keep your grass high.** Okay, not too high, but you don't want to go shorter than two inches. Mowing too short will encourage your grass to use up nutrient reserves to replenish growth.
  - Leave your clippings.** Grass clippings left on the lawn will provide nutrients for your grass and shade for the delicate roots just below the surface.
  - Keep your mower blade sharp - A dull blade will damage grass and pull out tender, new growth.**