

Healthy Yard - Tips and Facts

Go Organic: Just say NO or limit exposure to toxic chemicals.

Nourish with “brown gold” (compost), slow release organic rock fertilizers or limestone.

Make Your Turf Tough : Use grass varieties developed for your area.

Use sharp blades to mow 3 to 4 inches high. Short clippings decompose fast to add nitrogen instead of thatch. Water deeply only when needed and aerate for dense, deep roots.

Go Native!: Native plants mean less care, less time, less expense. The more native plants in your yard, the more healthy habitats for birds and other wildlife. Challenge—REDUCE LAWN AREA by 25% this season.

Know Your Enemies: Get a field guide to identify insects.

Match control to pest. Use control only if a high number of insects exist. Learn life cycles so that you do not treat unnecessarily.

Treat Only When Necessary: Use nontoxic methods first. Pick off and dispose of insects, vacuum, prune out infestations, or hose off garden plants.

Pick Your Pesticides: Not all chemicals are created equal. “Shotgun” killers harm beneficial insects.

Ask your lawn-care service to list pesticides used. Look for EPA toxicity ratings: caution (least toxic), warning, poison (most toxic).

Use Biological Controls or Biopesticides: Most have very little environmental impact.

Most decompose quickly and affect only the target pest.

Follow Directions and Protect Yourself: Read labels before you buy or use a product.

Always wear protective clothing while mixing and applying. Never use more than recommended. Remember—LESS IS BEST for survival of beneficial insects! Do not apply pesticides in windy conditions, near water sources, people, pets or wildlife habitat. Learn signs of pesticide poisoning.

Respect Your Neighbor’s “Right to Know”: Notify your neighbor before using pesticides that could drift, remain active on lawn areas, or settle in water. Children and pets are easily exposed and can take residues into homes. Ask neighbors and lawn services to do the same. Contact local municipalities to learn what, where, and when chemicals are used. Ask decision makers to consider safer alternatives.

Teach Tolerance and Be Tolerant: Create natural yards with a variety of pests, predators, weeds, wildlife and native plant species. Plant bird and wildlife habitat. Enjoy controlled untidiness, not time-consuming lawn maintenance. Show by doing. Encourage neighbors to build continuous habitat from yard to yard.

Note: Developed from *Audubon Guide for a Healthy Yard and Beyond*