

Checklist for a Healthy Home

Lawn & Garden Care

□ Mow high.



Did you know? Many believe that mowing your grass low means the longer they can wait to mow the grass again since it will be shorter. But by doing so, you are actually just making your grass unhealthy with every mow. Mowing your grass short and low causes stress on your grass, discourages deep root growth, and results in rapid moisture loss. Mowing higher means taller grass and taller grass has better abilities to compete with and choke out weeds and unwanted roots, requires less watering, and prevents soil from washing away.

Achieving and maintaining a green, healthy lawn is possible. Here are a few simple things you can do to make your grass a little greener (on both sides!):

- ◇ Don't mow your grass too short, don't let it grow too high, and mow when dry. Mowing at the proper height (usually 1.5" to 3", depending on the type of grass) is key. When you let it grow too high, the excess grass clippings can smother the turf. Also remember to cut it dry – mowing the lawn when wet often results in an uneven cut.
- ◇ Raise the mowing height during the hot and dry season. The higher setting will reduce the loss of moisture and will encourage deep root growth of your grass.

□ Grasscycle.

Get a little lazy and leave those grass clippings on the lawn! "Grasscycling" has proven benefits.

Grasscycling:

1. Leaves the grass on your lawn tougher and greener
2. Helps prevent common turf diseases
3. Reduces or eliminates the need for fertilizers
4. Cuts down on watering needs
5. Attracts earthworms, which break down thatch, aerate the soil, and reduce compaction



You can also mow right over leaves as these will decompose right along with the grass clippings. Mow it and leave it on your lawn, spread evenly.

Tip: Don't leave grass clippings and leaves on your lawn if they are too heavy and/or wet for grasscycling.

□ **Keep lawnmower blade sharp and clean.**

Just by keeping the blade on your lawnmower sharp and clean, you will make mowing easier and reduce the tearing of grass blades. When mowing, you want grass blades to be cut, not torn, as tearing of the blades has the potential to promote lawn diseases.

Tip: Try using a reel or push mower. Not only is it quiet, but its action cuts grass blades like a pair of scissors instead of tearing at them. It also has the power to cut down on pollution...

Did you know? Each weekend, over 50 million Americans mow their lawns, contributing to as much as 5% of the country's air pollution?

□ **Feed a hungry lawn and garden.**

Feeding your lawn and garden corn gluten meal prevents many weed seeds from germinating, reducing the number of pesky weeds that may grow, and also helps to add valuable nitrogen to the soil organically.

Use non-toxic fertilizers and pest control agents.

Nobody wants a lawn and garden full of toxins! Be sure to use non-toxic fertilizers and pest control agents, if necessary. Not only is going non-toxic better for your lawn and garden, it's better for you and your family – it reduces the amount of toxins that then run into our waterways, not only getting into our water, but probably the food we eat.

Use solar or LED to light your landscape.

When lighting your lawn and garden landscape, use solar or LED lighting. Solar lighting is powered solely by the sun, which charges up your lighting all day so that you can enjoy it at night and save a lot of energy in the process. Don't find solar lighting bright enough? LED lighting is bright, requires little power, and even lasts five to 10 times as long as other standard outdoor lights.

Take advantage of native plants.

Plants, flowers, and grasses that are native to your region have greater abilities to survive and thrive with the soil, water, and weather in your area. Tropical and exotic plants can be beautiful, but have a tougher time and require much more work and resources to take care of than do native plants, which are naturally just as beautiful!

A Lawn Alternative:



Try "Food Not Lawns." Utilize outdoor space to grow food for your home and family. Use local resources such as Grow Pittsburgh home gardening tips <http://www.growpittsburgh.org/start-a-garden/growers-resources/>.

