
Courtesy Copy: Summer fun on your organic lawn!

1 message

Where the Grass is Greener:



Welcome to the Department of Environmental Protection's monthly newsletter on organic lawns and lawn care. Discover tips and tools, learn about life in the soil, and connect with us on environmental stewardship of land and water.

What's New?



Weed ordinance got you down?

While we usually talk here about how to care for your lawn organically, there are quite a few folks who just simply want less lawn. Instead, they want a pollinator garden, meadow, or veggie patch.

Making the switch to less lawn requires prep work. You can't let the lawn go wild on its own, because it may not attract pollinators, and it certainly won't make your neighbors happy!

Many of us are hardwired to prefer lawns, and your neighbors may become uncomfortable when they see an atypical landscape.

If you want to make your neighbors and HOA happy and quit your lawn, [read our blog](#) for some tips and tools for making the switch.

Lawn Care Tips



What is liquid aeration, and should I consider it?



We recently received a question that had us scratching our heads: *is liquid aeration better than core aeration?*

Our staff hadn't even heard of liquid aeration, so we had to do some research to get the answer.

What is liquid aeration?

Liquid aeration is a process that is claimed to work as well as core aeration, but just with a liquid that is applied to the surface of the soil.

The liquid in *liquid aeration* has biological activity much like a compost tea, which is a benefit for soils. But the liquid cannot loosen a compacted soil through one or two applications.

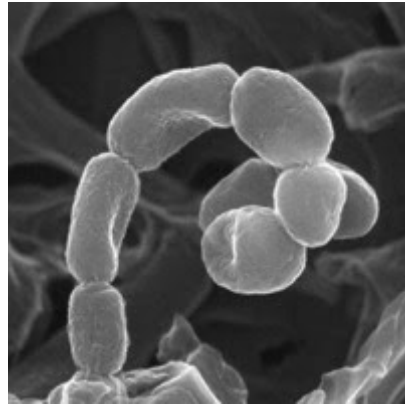
Choose core aeration.

While liquid aeration sounds tempting, (because it is promoted as requiring less labor), we suggest you always use core aeration.

Core aeration is typically done by a machine that pulls out plugs of soil as it runs across the lawn. Combined with a boost of microorganisms from compost or compost tea, core aeration helps microorganisms, organic materials, rainwater, and nutrients get into the root zone.

Learn more [here](#) about how to determine if you need to aerate your lawn.

Soil Science Shed



The role of actinomycetes bacteria in your soil

Ever wonder what makes that "earthy" smell of freshly turned soil?

It's coming from a group of bacteria called actinomycetes, and the odor comes from a volatile organic compound (VOC) they produce called geosmin.

More than half of the antibiotics used in human medicine are derived from soil actinomycetes, which are used to create anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, and anti-parasitic drugs.

Actinomycetes break down hard to degrade substances, such as cellulose and lignin from bark and stems, chitin from insect exoskeletons, organic-acids, and fatty proteins. They are also well known as degraders of toxic materials, and are therefore often used in bioremediation.

Other soil bacteria are important for converting nutrients into forms available to plants, but actinomycetes contribute to soil health through the creation of compost, and are therefore very important in improving the nutrient and water holding capacity of your lawn soils.

Want to improve actinomycetes in your soil?

Well-aged compost contains populations of these bacterium, but the key to is to feed them and make sure the soil is not compacted. Loose soils, abundant grass roots, and chopped up leaves left on the lawn provide habitat and abundant food sources for actinomycetes, which will in turn stabilize and improve lawn soils.

In the Community



Dogs eating your grass?

No one knows exactly why dogs eat grass. The most recent conclusion is that it's likely an innate predisposition from dog's ancestors, who ate grass to manage intestinal parasites.

But whether they just think it's tasty, or are hinting you didn't give them enough treats, many dogs will help mow the grass with their teeth.

Studies have shown an [increase in cancer rates](#) in dogs exposed to lawns that have been treated with chemicals, and even on lawns where adjacent properties have been treated, due to drift.

One more reason to go organic, so your pets, and your neighbor's pets, can play on, sleep in, or even eat the grass!

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