



resources

Yard And Garden

If you have a lawn, do you use it or do you simply maintain it? A picture-perfect lawn requires a lot of resources: water, fertilizer, pesticides and time. Lawn that isn't used for play or social activities could be replaced with water wise plants or shrubs or, better yet, used for a vegetable garden. There are many ways to make your yard healthier and the following checklist will help you move in this direction.

THE CHECKLIST

<p>Do you use pesticides (herbicides, fungicides, rodenticides, miticides) to control “pests” around your home?</p>	<p>Many pesticides have been shown to cause cancer, skeletal abnormalities and reproductive, neurological and immune system damage. The City of Calgary is in the process of introducing a bylaw that will phase out the “nonessential” use of pesticides by residents, city employees and lawn-care companies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic gardening methods such as handpicking weeds, mulching, companion planting and adding compost can all help to enhance the health of the soil, making it less susceptible to infestations. <p>Visit the Coalition for a Healthy Calgary (http://healthycalgary.ca/Page-7.html) to learn more about pesticide-free yards.</p>
<p>Do you use a rain barrel?</p>	<p>Rain barrels reduce pressure on our water supply, especially during the summer when water is most scarce. Water use climbs by 50% in the summer and collecting rain water is a great way to capture chemical free water that is the optimal temperature for plant growth. It is possible to capture 52,000 litres of rain water from the average Calgary home during a single season.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install at least one rain barrel at your home. These are available at Green Calgary’s EcoStore. Visit www.greencalgary.org for more information. • Divert downspouts onto lawns, into gardens or under trees.
<p>Is your mower height set to 3” (7.5cm)?</p>	<p>Mowing to no less than 3” (7.5cm) prevents the lawn from scorching by helping it to retain valuable moisture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect your mower and set it to a height of 3” (7.5cm).
<p>Do you compost your yard waste?</p>	<p>Compostable material accounts for nearly half of all waste going to landfill. By composting organic kitchen and yard waste the average Calgarian can reduce their waste by half.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get yourself a compost bin and use it. It should be in a convenient and sunny location. You can compost 12 months of the year. <p>For more information visit www.greencalgary.org and check out the Composting Guide under ‘Resources’.</p>
<p>Do you bag your lawn clippings?</p>	<p>Simply leaving them on the lawn is as good a solution as any. The process called grasscycling returns vital nutrients back to the lawn, while reducing the need to deal with them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave you clippings on the lawn. Raise the mower 3 inches (7.5 centimeters) to help retain moisture and reduce scorching. Try not to let the grass get overgrown as this will inhibit the grasscycling process.

Do you have an older gaspowered lawn mower?	A gasoline-powered lawnmower run for an hour puts out about the same amount of smog-forming emissions as 40 new automobiles running for 1 hour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace your gas-powered lawnmower with an electric, push or solar powered model. The Clean Air Foundation runs the Mow Down Pollution program each year, offering rebates of up to \$100 on participating models.
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Did you know?

Lawns require no more than 1” of water weekly. Overwatering does not allow the roots to grow deeply, making it hard to tolerate extreme summer conditions. Too much watering creates a shallow root system which requires frequent watering and may cause thatch or disease.

Use a rain gauge to measure the amount of water that has fallen each week. A rain gauge can be purchased or you may use a simple Frisbee, as most are roughly 1” inch (2.5cm) deep. If has rained 1” during a particular week there is no need to water!

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- The East Calgary landfill (located at 68 Street and 17 Avenue SE) offers free mulch to Calgary residents willing to pick it up. For more information visit www.calgary.ca and search East Calgary + Free Mulch.
- Consider using a digester to deal with pet waste. Click [here](#) for more information. Water your lawn in the morning when it is cool and there is little or no wind. This will reduce evaporation and lets the water go where it is needed.
- Aim your sprinkler, making sure that you are not watering the driveway, street or sidewalk.
- Aerate your lawn. This allows air, water and nutrients to reach the roots. Leave the small cores of soil that are cut out on the lawn. Rake or mow over the pieces to break them up. The naturally occurring micro-organisms in the cores will help to decompose thatch and enable your lawn to absorb more water.
- Ask for advice. Don't be shy to ask an expert or consult a lawn care book (see below) on information about seeding, applying compost or disease prevention.
- Mulch trees, shrubs and flowers. Mulch inhibits weed growth, while retaining moisture.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books

How to Get Your Lawn Off Grass (2002) by Carole Rubin

How to Get Your Lawn & Garden Off Drugs (2003) by Carole Rubin

Landscaping With Fruits and Vegetables (2001) by Fred Hagy

Food Not Lawns (2006) by Heather Coburn Flores

Programs & Web Resources

Evergreen (www.evergreen.ca): a non-profit organization that helps to make cities more livable.

Mow Down Pollution (www.cleanairfoundation.org/mowdownpollution): a program that encourages Canadians to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution by retiring old gas lawn mowers and trimmers.

Seedy Saturday: a family event that has displays by local seed savers, prairie seed companies, native plant collectors, conservation groups, community gardeners, organic growers; as well as, a seed exchange table, refreshments, presenters, entertainment, and a kids corner. Please visit www.seeds.ca/ev/events.php or www.calhort.org/events/ for more information.

The City of Calgary's Healthy Yards Program (www.calgary.ca – search 'Healthy Yards Program'): a program that helps homeowners create a more environmentally sustainable yard by combining the practices of composting, water conservation, responsible pest management, and grass cycling.

The City of Calgary's Planting Incentive Program (www.calgary.ca – search 'Planting Incentive Program'): a tree planting program approved by City Council for residential City property only. Community associations, neighbourhood groups or individuals may apply to plant trees in conjunction with Calgary Parks on a 50% matching basis.

The City of Calgary's Leaf, Pumpkin, & Christmas Tree Composting Program (www.calgary.ca – search 'Leaf + Pumpkin Composting')

Businesses Specializing in Xeriscaping

Naturescaping – Heron's Nest Landscape Design specializes in eco-urban landscape design and xeriscaping.
Angela Sommers – 403.309.4540.

Did you know?

In recent news, the Alberta Government has passed legislation banning the sale of “weed and feed” type products as of January 1, 2010. This follows the decision by Calgary's city council to phase out the use of pesticides used for cosmetic or non-essential purposes on private and public land over the next few years.

PRODUCED BY GREEN CALGARY

Empowering Calgarians to create healthy homes and communities by providing environmental education, products and services.

Green Calgary offers a variety of programs to help achieve mandates of waste reduction and water protection including Environmental Education; Healthy Homes Calgary; Commercial Environmental Services (formerly Calgary Materials Exchange); EcoStore - selling environmental products that reduce our environmental footprint; Information Services & E-newsletter.

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