



RUMSON BOROUGH GRASS "CUT IT & LEAVE IT!" PROGRAM

How to have a beautiful lawn and protect our ecosystem

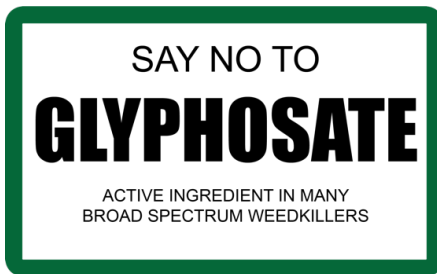
Leave the grass clippings on your lawn when you mow, and let nature do the recycling.

Grass clippings are a natural fertilizer for your lawn. Not only do clippings have a heavy moisture content, which adds water to your turf, but they decompose quickly and provide nutrients that will nourish the soil and root system.

Are you fertilizing your lawn too much?

Once established, you only need to fertilize your lawn in the fall if you "cut it and leave it!" According to Rutgers Cooperative Research Extension "fertilizing your lawn late in the season (September through November) the previous year reduces or eliminates the need for fertilizer in the spring, reduces frequency of mowing, and improves drought resistance." Fertilizing in the fall allows the roots system to establish while spring fertilizing promotes top growth, which requires more frequent mowing and can actually stunt root growth. Be careful not to fertilize your lawn if heavy rain is in the forecast. Instead of soaking into the soil where it can nourish your lawn, the fertilizer is likely to simply wash away with the stormwater and find its way to local waters causing algae blooms and leading to proliferation of jelly fish.

Avoid using broad spectrum weed killers that contain Glyphosate (active ingredient in many brands such as Roundup, Erasure, Remuda, etc)



Due to mounting evidence, the World Health Organization has reclassified Glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic to humans" and many studies have linked its use to contamination of soil and groundwater. Please check the label and do not buy products containing glyphosate, even if they say they are natural or organic. Proper lawn maintenance and the use of targeted pesticides are a much safer way to ensure a beautiful weed-free lawn.

Weeds can be effectively controlled while still limiting harmful chemicals.

Weeds and pests are opportunistic and invade where turf is sparse or stressed. The best way to prevent them is by maintaining a healthy dense turf cover using the methods described above. Once your lawn is healthy, occasional hand weeding may solve the problem. Remember, not all weeds are bad; clover is an example of a plant that has a symbiotic relationship with turf and the ecosystem. However, if you have a serious weed problem, you can use herbicides responsibly. Stubborn weeds require prompt action before they spread throughout the lawn. Follow these steps. 1) Identify the weed you have before applying herbicide. 2) Select a specific herbicide for the weed you are targeting. 3) Instead of blanketing entire lawn, apply only where necessary.

Planting native ground cover and border plantings when possible will reduce your reliance on fertilizers and helps protect the ecosystem.

Converting some of your unused lawn area to native plantings will greatly reduce the need for fertilizers and irrigation, help protect the waters and will provide a habitat for beneficial insects and wildlife that support the health of your whole yard. Beautiful pollinators, such as butterflies, and hummingbirds, are attracted to yards with the food and shelter of ground cover and gardens. Planting a hearty native perennial border along the curb or riverbank not only adds color and beauty but can capture water and nutrients before they enter the storm water system and local waterways. Pollutants and fertilizers entering our rivers harm our marine life and can lead to proliferation of jellyfish. ("Incorporating Native Plants in Your Residential Landscape", Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet FS1140, <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1140/>)



Over-watering can undermine the health of your lawn.

Even in dry periods, established lawns usually need a thorough watering only once a week, or twice if soil is sandy. Anything more is excessive and creates lawns with shallow root structures that evolve to rely on frequent watering. If you choose to irrigate your lawn, the most efficient time to water is between 10pm and 8am when the heat of the day will not evaporate the water before it is allowed to penetrate the soil to the root system. Contrary to popular belief, watering at night does not stimulate disease. To prevent over watering, sprinkler systems should be fitted with a rain censor to prevent unnecessary watering. ("Best Management Practices for Watering Lawns", Rutgers Cooperative extension FS555, <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/home-lawn-garden/>)

Proper mowing practices reduces proliferation of weeds and pests.

Maintaining a mowing height of 2½ to 3½ inches will help increase drought resistance and will decrease insects and disease damage. Turf that is kept at a height of 2 inches or less decreases drought and heat resistance and increases the incidence of insect and disease damage as well as weed invasion. ("Your Lawn and its Care", Rutgers Cooperative extension FS102, <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs102/>)



Leave the clover for the honeybees!

Many weed-killers target clover; however, clover has long been considered an important and attractive part of a healthy lawn. Not only does it support your local honeybee population, but clover adds nitrogen to the soil which fertilizes the grass it lives with. In addition to being green, hardy, and drought tolerant, it out-competes bad weeds and it grows well in shady spots

YOU CAN HAVE A BEAUTIFUL GREEN LAWN WHILE PROTECTING OUR LAND, WATER AND AIR WHEN YOU PRACTICE CAREFUL TURF MANAGEMENT, AND "CUT IT AND LEAVE IT!"

Useful links: Rutgers Cooperative Research & Extension, <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/home-lawn-garden/>, NJ Department of Environmental Protection, <https://www.state.nj.us/dep/dshw/recycling/educationandlinks.html>, Sustainable Jersey Program, <http://www.sustainablejersey.com/>, NJAES Protecting Bees, <https://protectingbees.njaes.rutgers.edu/>, Rumson Environmental Commission, <http://www.rumsonnj.gov/env>