

Sustainability Tip

Changing the Way We Care for Our Lawns

By Sarajane Snyder

It's spring and young people's fancies turn to love while landowners thoughts turn to lawn care. Well, some do. So if we're going to try to save the planet in ten years or less, it's time to change the way we care for our lawns. Where do we start?

Lawn care chemicals are a large contributor to water pollution and is a place individuals and churches can begin. There are sometimes direct substitutes for chemicals. **Corn gluten meal** is an organic pre-emergent herbicide and fertilizer that is widely available for instance.

Lawns can also be enormous users of irrigation water. Chemical fertilizers don't work unless they're copiously watered which then leads to weekly mowing. **A more natural lawn requires less water and less mowing.** Our church had been fertilizing monthly for years and cut back to three times two years ago with no noticeable negative affect. We are making a gradual transition to an organic lawn as we study the subject and learn about available options.

Another aspect of lawn care to consider is our overall philosophy about our lawns. Knowing that monoculture in planting is an unhealthy situation, let's **embrace diversity in our lawns.** Enjoy those bright and cheerful dandelion blossoms when they pop up in spring, knowing that they are an important first food for the honeybees. Let's also consider shrinking those lawns wherever we can and surrounding them with perennial gardens with lots of native plants that need less water and are food for pollinators.

We haven't got a lot of time, the situation is very urgent, we have a lot of changes to make. Let's start this spring and move toward healthier lawns and gardens around our homes and churches.