

Organic care boosts green



By Beth Burwinkel • Enquirer contributor • August 2, 2008

Post a Comment • Recommend • Print • Email • Click To Listen • Type Size: **A** A

Barbara Boat fed the birds and welcomed her grandchildren and pets into her yard, all the while treating her lawn with traditional lawn care products.

Advertisement



Then the Glendale woman started to wonder about the chemicals.

"We were potentially creating a toxic environment for all of them," she says of the children, pets and birds.

About two years ago Boat decided to try an organic lawn care company.

"It is nice and green," Boat says of her lawn. "You might have a few renegade grasses in it, but that doesn't matter."

Organic lawn care is becoming more popular in this part of the country, says Matt Maurer, owner of Pure Lawn, which serves parts of Cincinnati and Dayton. Maurer's company works on Boat's lawn.

Agreeing with Maurer is Wes Duren, landscape manager at Marvin's Organic Gardens in Lebanon, one of the first regional businesses to encourage organic gardening and lawn care.

Maurer says he usually starts customers on a bridge program where he reduces pesticide use and transitions the customer to an organic lawn.

During the transition period he tries to thicken the lawn so that it crowds out weeds. There are different methods of controlling weeds in an organic lawn, so the length of time a customer is in the bridge program varies, he says.

Maurer encourages aeration and over-seeding, along with proper mowing, to get a thick lawn quicker. Fall is a good time to aerate and over-seed, he says.

"Over time you're building up that soil life," he says. "You're building deeper root systems." Deeper roots mean less watering for homeowners.

Maurer's products are custom blended and designed to help with deficiencies of local soils.

At Marvin's Organic Gardens, Duren recommends combating weeds by applying corn gluten three to four times per season. Corn gluten is non-toxic and can be used on lawns or in gardens.

The caveat is that corn gluten will inhibit the growth of new seedlings. It shouldn't be used for biennial plantings. Duren says to wait to apply it until a new lawn or vegetation has germinated and grown a couple of inches.

Another organic way to improve a lawn is to add a layer of compost, Duren says. The compost can be applied any time, although he prefers to use it in early spring or early fall.

Apply a half-inch layer of compost, rake it in and give it time to work its way into the soil. The compost wards off diseases and helps the lawn hold moisture.

A lawn will look darker when the compost is first applied, but the darker appearance will go away within a couple of weeks, Duren says.

"It is literally like ringing the dinner bell for the (beneficial) soil organisms deep in the soil," he says.

Duren recommends corn gluten in early spring, followed by specialized organic fertilizers in late spring, early fall and late fall. Marvin's sells its own private label fertilizers.

Matt Maurer's Web site, www.mypurelawn.com, offers tips for mowing and watering lawns.

Marvin's Organic Gardens' Web site, www.marvinsorganicgardens.com, offers advice for gardeners and homeowners.

In your voice

Read reactions to this story

POWERED BY Pluck

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)