

Getting The Ideal Lawn Naturally!

Morton Grove Public Library

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What is Natural Lawn Care?

- A systems approach
- Use of organic fertilizers
- No pesticides (insecticides and herbicides)

Why Make the Switch to Natural Lawn Care?

- Protect the health of your family and pets.
- Protect the environment from unnecessary pesticide usage
- Because it is easy!
- Reduce runoff of pesticides into our watershed.
- Schools and childcares have laws that recommend NLC and require notification of pesticide spraying.

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LAWN CARE IMPACTS

Pesticide by Any Other Name

- **Insecticides** - grub control
- **Herbicides** - broadleaf, dandelion sprays
- **Herbicides combined with Fertilizer** - Weed and Feed
- **Fungicide** - for fungus

Water Impacts

- Pesticides in our Water
- Fertilizers
- Dead waters



Air Impacts

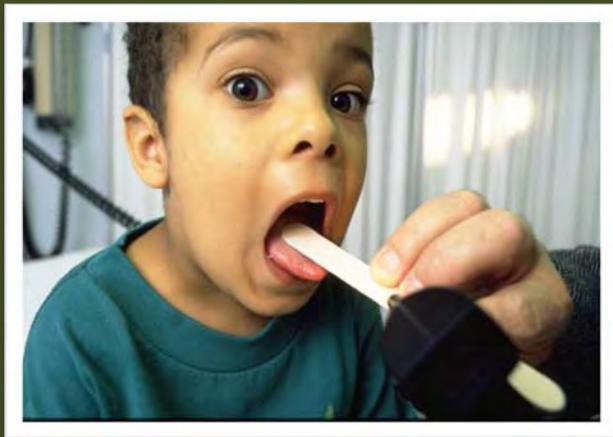
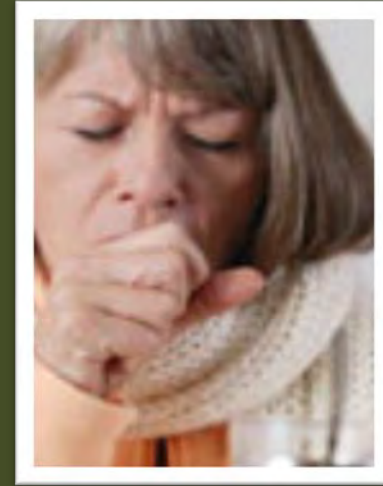


- ⦿ **Equipment pollution**
- ⦿ **Airborne pesticides**



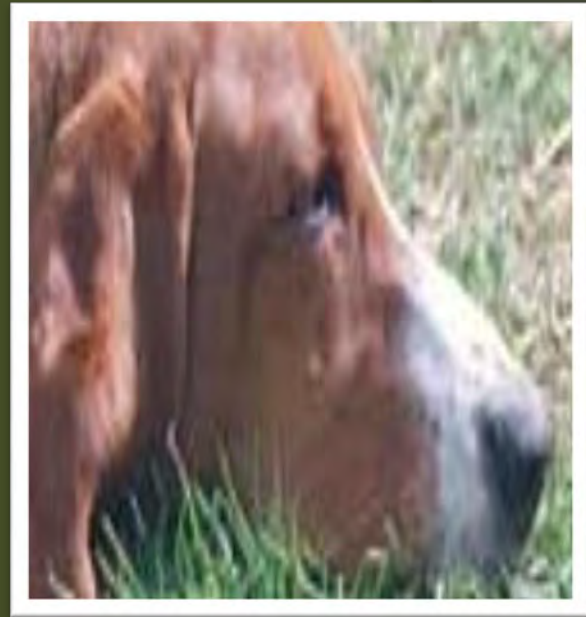
Health Effects – Pesticides (acute)

- Accidental Poisoning
- Asthma
- Neurological Damage



- Cancer
- Immune System Damage

Wildlife Impacts



Chemical Lawns not “Healthy” Lawns



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NATURAL LAWN CARE 101

True or False?

- A healthy lawn is weed and insect free

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FALSE

- ⦿ A weed free lawn is unrealistic
- ⦿ Insects are important
 - Integral part of a healthy soil
 - Feed other organisms
 - Eat other insects

Basic Steps of a Natural Lawn Care Program

- Test Soil
- Fertilize Organically
- Water Correctly
- Weed on a timely basis with good tools
- Mow Correctly

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FIRST THE SOIL

Test Your Soil

- Testing will provide vital information on the amount and type of fertilizer and the pH of your soil
- Soil pH should be slightly acid to neutral, or 7

Soil Test



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THEN THE GRASS

Ideal Grass Characteristics



Plant the Right Kind of Grass Seed

- Rye and Fescue are good choices
- Sod versus seed

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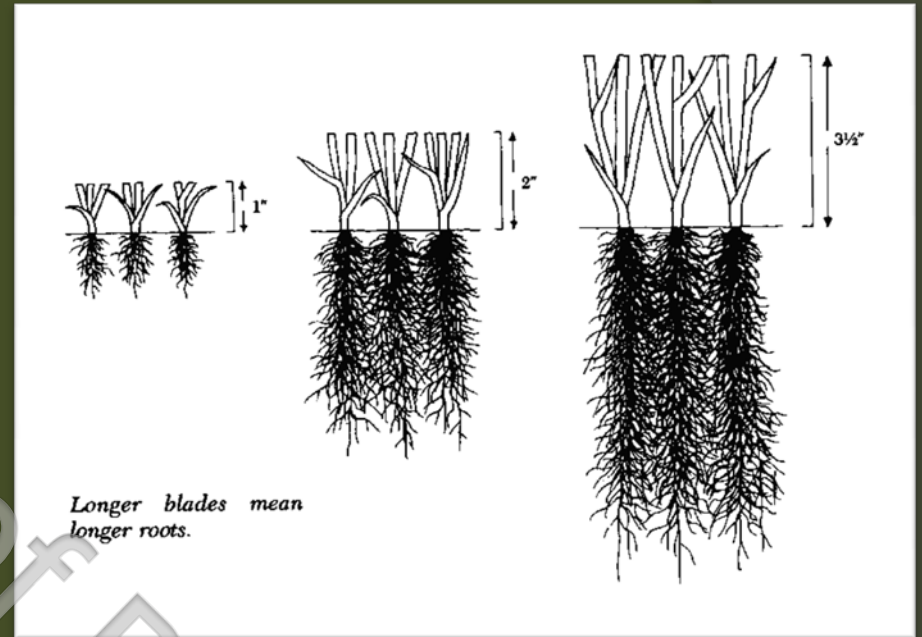
Getting Good Grass



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MAINTENANCE FOR NATURAL LAWN CARE

Mow Properly



- Mow 3" or higher
- Remove only 1/3 of grass blade
- Sharpen mower blades

Clippings: Keep Clippings on Your Lawn



Water Wisely



- ◉ Dormancy is okay
- ◉ Deeply & infrequently
- ◉ Early a.m.
 - Must penetrate soil & surface must dry
 - Disease = water logged soils + time

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Additional Natural Lawn Care Practices

Fertilizer: Clearing the Confusion

- Organic – anything that contains carbon
- Natural – plant or animal based *organic matter*
- Synthetic – fossil fuel based
- Buyer beware – look at ingredients
 - Natural/organic: no synthetics
 - Bridge products: some synthetic
 - Bio-solids: sustainable?



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WEEDS— HOW TO REDUCE AND ELIMINATE THEM NATURALLY

What is a weed?



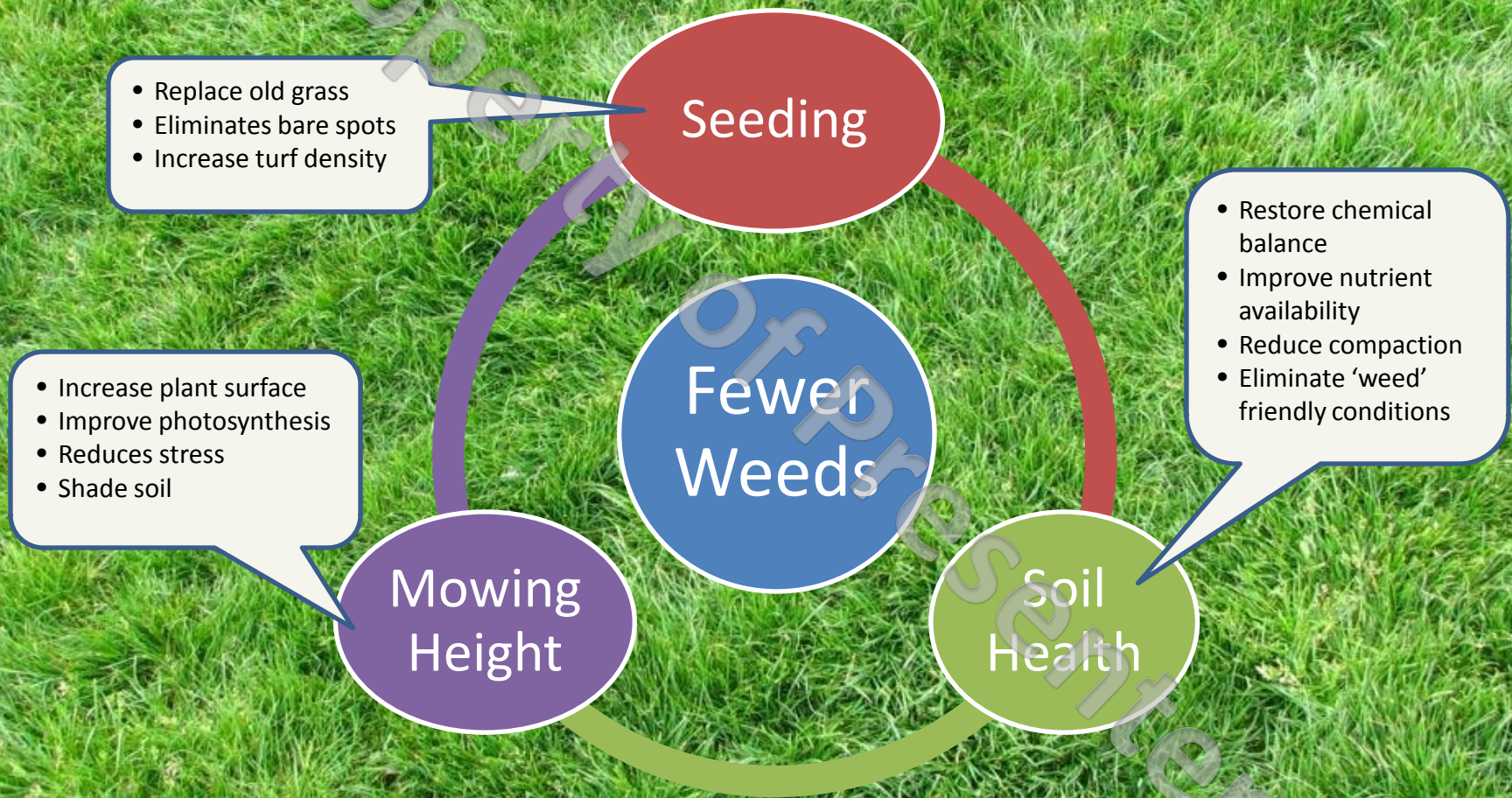
- Historical perspective
 - 60 years ago
 - Today
 - Dandelions

Weeding the Natural Way

Selective products are on the way. Until then...

1. Seed inhibitor: Corn Gluten
2. Spot treatment: vinegar, clove, thyme
3. Hand weeding (where feasible)

Healthy Lawn = Weed Control



Every weed tells a story.

My lawn and garden (plus kids)



Chicago Tribune Article June 2011



Paul Tukey at the Chicago Premiere of “A Chemical Reaction”



The Organic Lawn Care Manual



A great book for learning about Natural Lawn Care by Paul Tukey

Getting Started

- ◎ Safer Pest Control Project – fact sheets, articles, videos
 - www.spcpweb.org
- ◎ Recommended reading
 - ***The Organic Lawn Care Manual* by Paul Tukey**
 - Great step-by-step ‘how to’ manual
 - *American Green: The Obsessive Quest for the Perfect Lawn* – by Ted Steinberg
 - *How to Get your Lawn Off Drugs* – by Carole Rubin

THANK YOU

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