

Making America Organic...One Home At a Time!



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Organic Lawns: It's Easy Being Green

Americans love their lawns - so much so that they've planted some 30 million acres of them - from the White House to the California desert.

But concerns are rising that those lush, weed-free lawns represent an environmental hazard. The problem isn't the lawns themselves, which benefit the environment in many ways, critics say. It's the way they encourage overuse of everything from fertilizer and pesticides to water.

Such practices are coming under increasing scrutiny, not only from environmentalists but also from lawn-industry companies, which are keeping a wary eye on the amorphous, but rapidly growing, organic lawn movement.

"Lawns probably haven't risen to the level of a major national environmental issue - yet," says Paul Parker, executive vice president of the Center for Resource Management in Salt Lake City, a nonprofit environmental group that encourages collaboration among business leaders, government, and environmental groups. "But the acreage of lawns is so significant that water, pesticide use, and loss of wildlife habitat are increasingly important."

* For the first time ever, lawn equipment, fertilizer, and pesticide industry representatives have joined with environmental groups and the Environmental Protection Agency to create a "Lawn and Environment Coalition." Last year, the coalition unveiled the first-ever draft guidelines for national lawn-care practices to help Americans protect the environment while they green their lawns.

* By most accounts, the number of lawn care companies touting a natural, organic approach is rising rapidly. At least one traditional lawn care company is developing its own line of organic products - although there's no agreement on what "organic" means.

* Across the border in Canada, Quebec will restrict the cosmetic use of lawn and garden pesticides beginning next year. Dozens of

other Canadian municipalities have also restricted pesticide use.

* The National Wildlife Federation and the National Audubon Society are among several groups now campaigning to convince Americans to plant more gardens and plants and less lawn. If attendance at organic lawn-care classes is any indication, consumers are beginning to listen.

Two years ago, Leticia Safran told her husband she was dropping their traditional lawn-care service to go the natural route. "What made me switch was my three kids and our dog," says the Natick, Mass., homemaker. "On the days when the chemical company came to spray the lawn, I just didn't have a good feeling about the little sign they put on lawn - telling us to stay off for two days."

Instead, she hired an organic specialist who treated her lawn with a combination of gypsum, compost, humate shale - and a combination fish-emulsion and seaweed spray. This spring her lawn received those ingredients plus a "compost tea" that also included yucca extracts and sugar.

The Safrans could be on to the next big thing. About 4 out of 5 US households have private lawns, according to a 1998 academic study. They are typically about a third of an acre, and in 2003, Americans spent \$38.4 billion tending those yards and gardens, about \$457 per household, says the National Gardening Association. A growing portion of that money appears to be going organic, observers say.

"Hybrid mowers, water conserving sprinklers, and organic fertilizers are all potential gold mines for industry players," wrote Don Montuori, acquisitions editor for Packaged Facts, in a market-research report last spring. "Consumers who want to tend their yard in an ecologically sound manner will pay big money for the right tools, and as the industry stands right now, the big players are missing

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Week of May 23, 2006

Harvest Blend Regular

- Yellow Corn
- Carrots
- Spinach
- Fuerte Avocado
- Red Chard
- Russet Potatoes
- Tomatoes
- Yellow Onions
- Red Radishes
- Valencia Oranges
- Packham Pears
- Bananas
- Strawberries
- Madame Francis Mango

See the web site for details on our other options. Produce bag contents are subject to change based on availability.

OO Reminder

Now that warmer days are upon us, please remember it is your responsibility to leave a cooler outside your door if you are not home to receive the delivery.

This is especially important if you are receiving dairy with your produce.

While we have, in the past, left the thermal bags at your door, we would really prefer not to do so, as the return rate on these bags is often a problem for us.

A cooler is also better for you because ice packs in the cooler will do a better job of keeping your food fresh in the ambient temperature than our bags without any ice.

Thank you for your business, and let us know if you have any questions.

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out on all of that revenue."

That may be changing. Scotts, the big fertilizer and yard-care products manufacturer, is developing a new line of organic lawn-care products.

But whether lawns really represent an environmental threat remains hotly debated. Environmentalists point out that all those lush, weed-free acres sop up gargantuan quantities of water and chemicals. In a typical year, the average lawn consumes about 10,000 gallons of water over and above rainfall, the Environmental Protection Agency reports. Nearly a third of urban water use in the Eastern US goes to watering lawns, it adds.

In addition, millions of pounds of chemicals get dumped on lawns. In 1999, the last year such figures were available, 78 million pounds of yard insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides were sold to US households - not including professional applications, the EPA said. If they're overused (and some would argue even when they're not), pesticide and fertilizer runoff can pollute rivers and groundwater.

Then there are the millions of gallons of gasoline used in lawn

equipment, whose engines are generally not as efficient as cars and can cause significant air pollution, California Air Resources Board says.

Even defining "organic" remains problematic. "Not all organic care is the same," says Nick Novick, who runs Small Planet Landscaping in Ashland, Mass. "We're at the point in this industry that organic foods were a few years ago. We need standards and government enforcement...."

That seems to be coming. The Northeast Organic Farming Association recently published the first-in-the-nation technical standards for organic yard care.

But the biggest change of all may be the expectations of people like Debora White of Wellesley, Mass., who is in her third year of organic lawn care. She's changed her outlook on what a lawn should be. "My neighbors were recently admiring my lawn, and they had no idea I had dumped the chemical company," she says. "I just thought it was a better way to go. I don't want to be a crusader. I'm just doing what I can do."

Recipes

Strawberry-Mango Salsa

- 1 cup diced strawberries
- 1/2 cup diced mango
- 1/4 cup diced yellow bell pepper
- 2 tbsp fresh lime juice
- 1 tbsp minced chives
- 1 tbsp chopped cilantro
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp red-wine vinegar
- 1 tsp minced fresh chile
- 1 salt and freshly ground black pepper

Combine all of the ingredients in a bowl and refrigerate for 1 hour. Serve cold or at room temperature.

Chard and Ricotta Pie

- 1 large bunch Swiss chard
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 bunch green onions, sliced 1/4 inch thick
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp coarsely ground black pepper
- 4 large eggs
- 1 pkg. (15 oz.) ricotta cheese
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 2 tbsp cornstarch

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease a 9 1/2 inch deep dish glass pie plate. Trim off and discard end of chard stems. Separate stems from leaves, thinly slice stems and coarsely chop leaves. In a large non-stick skillet, heat oil until hot. Add sliced stems and cook 4 minutes or until tender, stirring frequently.

Carrot Avocado Salad

- 1 lb medium carrots

- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 small garlic clove, finely chopped
- 3/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1 firm-ripe avocado

Halve carrots lengthwise, then cut diagonally into 2-inch pieces. Cook carrots in a 4- to 6-quart pot of boiling salted water until just tender, 5 to 6 minutes. Drain in a colander and transfer to a bowl of ice and cold water to stop cooking. Let stand 5 minutes, then drain again and pat dry.

While carrots cool, stir together cilantro, onion, oil, lemon juice, garlic, salt, and pepper in a large bowl until combined. Quarter avocado lengthwise, then peel and pit. Cut into 1/2-inch pieces and add to dressing along with carrots. Toss to combine.

Lemony Rice Salad with Carrots and Radishes

- 2 tbsp water
- 1 tsp grated lemon rind
- 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp chopped fresh or 1/2 tsp dried thyme
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 2 cups hot cooked rice
- 3/4 cups shredded carrot
- 3/4 cups shredded radish
- 1/4 cups golden raisins
- 3 tbsp chopped walnuts, toasted

Combine first 7 ingredients in a small bowl. Combine rice and remaining ingredients and toss with dressing. Serve warm or at room temperature.