

## EACoE Environotes

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### **ORGANIC FALL LAWN MAINTENANCE**

*by Anneliese Krueger, EACoE Member*

Fall is a great time to get a head start on that perfect lawn! Here are some tips to get your lawn ready for winter and another beautiful, green summer:

Aerate: Aerating your lawn allows the soil to loosen and therefore makes more oxygen available to the roots of your grass and allows the roots to grow more freely. Aerating creates little “wells” in your lawn, which capture water and bring it further down into the lawn. Aerating can be done in small areas using hand tools, or commercial machines can be rented.

Overseed and Topdress: This should be done in early fall. Use a mixture specialized for the sunlight conditions of your lawn (sun/shade) and one that has perennial rye and fine fescue. These types of grass are better suited to Canadian climate. Avoid Kentucky Blue grass! Although this grass is lush and beautiful, it requires a lot of water and is not suited to Canadian climate. Spread the seed over your existing grass and cover it with a 1/4” layer of topsoil or compost. (\*Look out for the next EnviroNotes article on yard waste composting!)

Mow High: Mowing high (not cutting your grass really short) allows the grass plant to channel its energy to growing a healthy root system, rather than growing more grass blades. The healthier and longer the roots, the greater the survival rate of the grass over the winter.

Water Deeply: Water your lawn less frequently, but for greater periods of time. The longer you water, the deeper into the soil the water goes. Remember that the grass roots will grow where the water is. If the grass roots are longer and deeper in the soil, they’ll be more tolerant to drought and harsh winter conditions.

Fertilize Naturally: Fertilizing in the fall follows nature’s example, leaving lots of nutrients for the grass to slowly utilize over the winter, and giving the grass a boost in the spring. Why use a synthetic chemical fertilizer when so many natural ones exist? Some examples include alfalfa meal, fish emulsion (rich in nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium), bone meal (rich in phosphorous and potassium), blood meal (rich in nitrogen), and composted poultry manure. All of these fertilizers are slow acting and therefore won’t burn your lawn like synthetic chemical fertilizers can. Fertilize in September or October.

*Recipe for All Purpose Weed Killer*

Mix 2 tablespoons of salt and 5 tablespoons of

vinegar into 1 quart of hot water. Spray the mixture onto the undesired plants while still hot.

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