

Resident Services

- Accessibility
- Animal Services
- By-Law Enforcement
- Cemetery Services
- Documents & eForms
- Emergency & Health
- Environment
- Fire Services
- Getting Around
- Government Services
- Library
- Licensing/ Permits/ Certificates
- Maps
- Parking Services
- Parks & Recreation
- Property Info
- Seniors
- Service Oshawa
- Snow Removal
- Students
- Utilities
- Waste Collection

[Home](#) > [Residential Services](#)

Natural Growth Lawn Care

Follow the information on this web site to start reducing the use of pesticides around your home. Remember: a perfect lawn and pest-free home is only part of the big picture. What is most important is preserving our health and environment.



Pest Management Program

The City of Oshawa has been implementing its Pest Management Program for the past 6 years. City parks have used alternative products like kelp, corn gluten, worm castings, liquid fertilizer, granular products to retain moisture, vinegar, fish fertilizer and compost topdressing. Maintenance has included a cutting height of 3 inches, over-seeding, soil tests every 2 years, fertilizing, aerating and topdressing when required. Please check out some before and after pictures of City fields.

[Click here to view before and after pictures of City fields](#)



[Provincial Pesticide Ban](#)



[Dandelions](#)



[Emerald Ash Borer](#)

- [Top 5 Turf Product Picks](#)
- [7 Steps to a Healthy Lawn](#)
- [Salt or Pet Damage to Turf](#)
- [Soil pH](#)
- [Nutrients](#)
- [Native Plants](#)
- [Lawn Alternatives](#)
- [Chemical Alternatives](#)
- [Beneficial Insects](#)
- [Insect Pests](#)
- [Grubs](#)
- [Rust Fungal Disease](#)

Provincial Pesticide Ban

The Provincial Pesticide Ban came into effect on April 22, 2009. [Click here](#) to view the Pesticide Ban Regulations and the Pesticide Act or visit the Ministry of Environment website at www.ontario.ca/environment .

****NOTE:** To request enforcement for illegal pesticide use, please contact the Ministry of Environment at 1-800-565-4923.

Dandelions

Due to the Provincial Pesticide Ban, (see above link) dandelions can no longer be sprayed with

traditional herbicides. The only spray that can be used is horticultural vinegar; it can be applied as a spot spray but be careful as it will kill the grass too.



The best way to keep dandelions out of your lawn is to keep it thick and healthy. Our *7 Steps to a Healthy Lawn* will guide you through the process.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

The EAB (*Agrilus planipennis*) is an insect that attacks and kills all ash trees except the Mountain Ash which is not a true ash. It is native to eastern Asia. Eggs are laid on the bark and the larvae feed just under the bark which kills the tree. The EAB has been found in the following municipalities in Ontario; London, Ottawa, Mississauga, Oakville, Brampton, Vaughan, Toronto, Bluewater and Pickering. The largest threat of spreading the EAB is by infested wood material.

Adult beetles are metallic blue-green, narrow, hairless, elongate, 8.5 to 14.0 mm long and 3.1 to 3.4 mm wide. Exit holes are D shaped 3.5 by 4.1mm.

Please contact Parks Services at 905-436-3311 or the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (1-866-463-6017) if you believe you have a positive sighting.

[Click here](#)  for more information or visit the Canadian Food Inspection Agency website at www.inspection.gc.ca .



Top 5 Turf Product Picks

1. Liquid kelp is a great product to put down immediately after over-seeding. It provides all required nutrients for the growing grass. It is also a great product to put down during the heat of the year and other times of stress.
2. Compost topdressing or compost tea. Ensure the compost is completely broken down. If it smells bad it is bad; don't use it. This will provide all the beneficial micro-organisms with required food so they can do their job. It also provides turf with other required nutrients.
3. Corn Gluten is a corn by-product that prevents the germination of seeds; essentially weed seeds. Ensure you ask the proper time for application. If you are planning to over-seed, ensure you wait at least 4 weeks after the corn gluten application, or the grass seed will not grow.
4. Liquid fertilizers. Only apply required amounts of fertilizer; this is determined by getting a soil test. Liquid (foliar) fertilizers are taken it up almost immediately through the leaves of the grass. Solid (granular) fertilizers must first break down before it is made available for the plants.
5. Endophytic grass seed. Endophytic means the grass has been colonized by good fungi. Fungi grow in the soil with the grass roots and bring nutrients to the grass that is too far for the roots to get.

7 Steps to a Healthy Lawn

A healthy lawn is less susceptible to weeds, diseases and insects. Follow the seven steps below to produce a healthy lawn, free of chemicals.

1. Mowing

- Keep blades sharp.
- Mow when grass is dry.
 - Wet lawnmowers spread disease spores.
 - Prevents clumping of grass clippings.
- Mow at 3-inch height.
 - Will have greater root growth and shoot re-growth, and more lateral stems.
 - Prevents weed seed germination.
 - Do not remove more than 1/3 of the height of grass.
- Leave clippings on the lawn.
 - Clippings do not cause thatch; grass leaves are 80 per cent water and break down fast.
 - Grass cycling provides 1/4 of the lawn's required fertilizer.

2. Fertilizing

- Test the soil to determine fertilizer requirements.
 - Only apply the type and amount of fertilizer required.
 - Too much fertilizer does more harm than good.
 - Use natural or slow-release fertilizers.

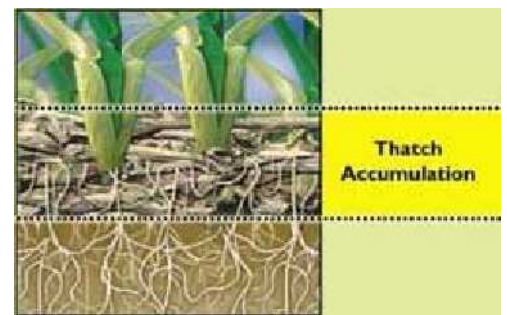


3. Aerating

- May to June or September to October.
- DO NOT ROLL TURF - Rolling turf increases soil compaction.

4. Dethatch

- Thatch is a layer of dead material comprised of rhizomes, roots and stolons.
- Grass clippings do not cause thatch.
- A small layer of thatch (1/2 inch or less) is actually good for the lawn, providing mulch and a cushion.
- Dethatch your lawn in the spring or fall every 2-3 years.



5. Over-seeding

- May to June or September to October.
- Over-seeding should be done after aerating to provide good seed-to-soil contact.
- Use the proper mixture of grass for the area.

6. Watering

- Water in the early morning or mid-evening to prevent evaporation of the water.
- Water deeply and infrequently.
 - Water 1 inch a week. Any more is wasted and any less produces shallow rooting systems.
- Irrigation systems can reduce the amount of water wasted by using a timer, rain sensors and placing water only where it is needed.

7. Correct Grass Species

- Grasses, like many plants, have tolerance limits. In order to ensure a healthy stand of turf grass be sure to use the correct species for the correct area.
- Kentucky bluegrass does not grow well in shade; however, fescues grow extremely well in

shade.

- It may be best to plant perennials in areas that will not produce healthy turf.

Salt or Pet Damage to Turf

Damage to turf in areas beside sidewalks or a road is probably due to salt damage. Gypsum can be applied to help the turf recover from salt or pet urine damage. Contact your local fertilizer supply store to see if they sell granular gypsum. When applying it to the turf, ensure you sweep it of any hard surface areas as it becomes slippery when wet.

Nutrients

All plants require nutrients in order to grow. The most commonly known nutrients are Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), and Potassium (K), these are primary nutrients. However there are other nutrients that plants require; secondary nutrients like Calcium, Magnesium, and Sulphur. Micronutrients include Iron, Manganese, Zinc, Copper and Boron. Primary and secondary nutrients require yearly replacement. Micronutrients are replaced only when deficiency symptoms are evident or soil tests recommend it.

Native Plants

Native species are those that grew in the region prior to European settlement. They are extremely important to wildlife; providing food and shelter. Another benefit of native plants is low maintenance. They are not fertilized, watered, or sprayed with chemicals as often as a lawn, and they do not have to be mowed. All these items save money. Once established, native plants do not need to be watered and are more resistant to pests, diseases and drought. It is important to select plants with growth requirements that best match the conditions in the area to be planted.



Blue eye grass



Jack-in-the-pulpit



Canada Anemone



Foam Flower

Lawn Alternatives

Lawn alternatives are a great way to reduce the amount of lawn on your property and therefore your maintenance time and cost. Be sure to select plants that are resistant to pests and use the right plant for the right area. Do not place shade plants in full sun and vice versa.

Ground Covers

- Ground covers are plants that cover the ground but do not grow tall and therefore do not require mowing. Flowering or herbal plants are available.

Mini Mow Mixtures

- Pre-made mixtures have a variety of plants, which flourish as a lawn and are cut only twice a season.

Clover

The benefits include no watering, fertilizing or mowing. Clover stays green in the driest parts of the year and only costs about \$4 to cover 4000 square feet.

Flower or Shrub Beds

- Can provide low maintenance areas.
- Plants should be planted in areas that are hard to mow, like slopes or under low hanging trees.
- Use native perennials, they are hardy and require less attention.
- Select varieties that do not require pruning, dividing or staking.



Chemical Alternatives

There are products in the home that can be used to kill plants. The following list will kill any plant it comes in contact with.

- Vinegar (regular white)
- Coca-Cola
- Boiling Water

To prevent dandelion seeds from spreading, vacuum them up with a dust-buster. Corn Gluten is a product sold as Turf Maize that prevents the germination of seeds. There are many ways to reduce pests in the garden and house without having to use pesticides. Below is a list of some all-purpose recipes to kill insects that can be made with products found around the house.

- Fill 3/4 of an empty spray bottle with water, then add a few drops of liquid dish soap, some hot peppers or hot pepper sauce and some garlic.
- Grind together 3 hot peppers, 3 large onions, and one whole bunch of garlic. Cover the mash with water and place in a covered container. Let stand overnight. Strain through cheesecloth or fine strainer and add enough water to make 4L. Spray on desired plants.
- Mix 2.5 tablespoons of mild dish washing liquid with the same amount of vegetable cooking oil with 4L of water. Spray on desired plants.
- Combine 1-2 cups rubbing alcohol with 1L of water. TEST spray on a small section of plant, wait a day to see if damage occurs to plant.
- Mix 2 tablespoons of soap flakes in 1L of water, spray on plants.
- 1 bar neem soap (from health food store) and 1L water. Shave off 1 tablespoon of neem

soap and add to 1L of water. Spray plants.

Beneficial Insects

The concept of using beneficial insects as biocontrol is simple: increase the ratio of predators to prey and it will create a natural balance that will protect your garden. When used in conjunction with other organic and non-toxic garden products like insecticidal soaps and sticky traps, beneficial insects can provide efficient and environmentally safe pest management.

Here are a few tips on how to use beneficial insects in your garden:

Target the Pest

Think about which fruits, vegetables or flowers you have and do some investigative work on which pests in your specific area tends to be a problem. With the help of a nursery person, choose a beneficial insect to release in your garden that will go after these pests.

Create an Appealing Environment

For bugs, this means plenty of food, water and shelter. One way to encourage the process is to have plenty of native plants. If you create a good environment, your beneficial insects may breed and reproduce, which will create a permanent army of good bugs.

No Chemicals

Make sure you haven't sprayed. Remember if there are lingering pesticides on your plants and soil your beneficial insects will suffer.

Release during Early Spring to Mid-Summer

Insects don't like extreme heat or cold, so you'll get the best results if you release beneficials during the mild weather seasons. It's also better to release the insects in the early morning or early evening.

Watch For the First Signs of Pests

Don't wait until a pest problem is out of control. Due to the slow process of reducing a population through natural means, you'll probably lose some of your crops. Release beneficials either before the problem occurs when the plants are young, or when you see the very first signs of damage to the plants. Below are links to sites that have pictures and information about beneficial insects.

- <http://www.ext.vt.edu/departments/entomology/ornamentals/beneficials.html> 🌐
- <http://www.buglogical.com/> 🌐

Below is a list of plants that many different beneficial insects use. Make sure some of these plants are in your garden.

- Basils
- Bee Balms
- Black Eyed Susans
- Blanket Flower
- Butterfly Bushes
- Catmints
- Chamomiles
- Curry Plant
- Fleabane
- Flowering Thymes
- Germanders
- Hyssops
- Mints (in pots)
- Oreganos
- Purple Cone Flower
- St. John's Wort
- Valerian
- White Rockrose
- Yarrow

Below is a link to a web site that has a large list of plants to attract certain beneficial insects:
<http://www.hortsource.com/beneficialplants.htm>

Insect Pests

There are more than one million insect species on this planet and less than one percent of those are considered pests. The other 99% are important to us for many different factors. For example many insects eat insect pests, some pollinate fruits and vegetables, and burrowing insects aerate the soil. Many insects are a food source for different animals. Be sure the pest you are trying to eliminate is not one of the 99% good insects.

Ants

Place any one of these items where ants are and they will leave: Arm & Hammer Baking Soda, Cream of Wheat, coffee grounds, uncooked minute rice or salt.

- Vinegar: Pour vinegar directly on hills; it will kill ants.
- One cup borax, 2/3 cup sugar and one cup of water, dip cotton balls into the solution then place around hills, the ants will suck up the mixture and die.



Apply any item below to prevent ants from entering areas; ants will not walk over:

- Baby Powder
- Chalk
- Cinnamon
- Crayola
- Flour
- Pepper

Aphids

- Lemonade, lemon juice or Tang: mix 4 teaspoons of powder to two cups of water in a 16 oz trigger-spray bottle. The mixture will kill the aphids.
- Peppermint soap: Mix one tablespoon of peppermint soap into two cups water in a 16 oz trigger-spray bottle. The mint will repel aphids.
- Ivory Dishwashing soap: Mix one-half ounce of dishwashing liquid and two cups of water in a 16 oz trigger-spray bottle. Spray the infected plants, wait one hour then spray with clean water.
- Tennis ball, Petroleum Jelly and Ziploc bags: Use electric drill to put an eyehook into the ball, place the Ziploc bag over the ball and coat the bag with Petroleum Jelly. Hang the ball over infested plants. The aphids will be attracted to the yellow ball and get stuck in the Petroleum.



Grubs

- Prior to purchasing nematodes, check to see if you have a grub infestation. Do this by digging a few inches under the turf and looking for the white C-shaped grub. Did you know that starlings feed their young exclusively on grubs.
- Nematodes can be sprayed onto wet soil that is infested with grubs.
- Spray regular Palmolive dish soap on the grass in the rain.



Mosquitoes

- Bounce fabric sheets repel mosquitoes. When working outdoors put, Bounce sheets through the hole in your hat and pant loops.
- Dishwashing liquid (one teaspoon) added to one gallon of water in rain barrels and other pools will kill any developing mosquito larvae.
- Birdbaths, pools and other standing water should be drained once a week to prevent the development of mosquito larva.

Slugs and Snails

- Beer or Coca-Cola placed in a shallow saucer or Frisbee will attract slugs and snails. The alcohol destroys their body tissue and they die.
- Charcoal briquettes can be broken up in a bag and sprinkled around the border of garden bed to prevent slugs and snails from crossing into garden.
- Sandpaper can be placed as a collar at the bottom of plants; slugs and snails will not crawl over it.



Chinch Bugs

Many lawns are remaining brown into the fall. The problem may not be grubs. Grubs eat the roots, so the grass is easy to pull back and out of the soil. Chinch bugs suck the sap from the crown leaving the roots, so the blades of the grass die but the roots remain intact in the soil.



Chinch Bugs: Adults are 4mm in length; the immature nymphs are bright red in colour and darken to grey/brown. Chinch bugs are very hard to see as they appear transparent.

If you suspect chinch bug damage, try this test to determine if they are indeed present.

1. Get a large can or clear bottle with a circular area of approximately 200cm.
2. Cut the bottom out and the top to form a cylinder and force this into the turf (2-3 inches)
3. Fill the cylinder with water, wait a few minutes and look for tiny bugs.

You can get a small clear cup and scoop up some water and look on the surface.

This photo shows an example of turf damage caused by the chinch bug. For an alternative control of chinch bugs try neem oil. It is a plant extract that is a natural insecticide. Spray the diluted neem oil onto the damaged turf then water thoroughly. Neem does not affect beneficial insects as they do not eat plant material. Ask your local garden centers or environmental product stores to see if they carry neem oil.



Rust Fungal Disease

You may have noticed a red colour to the grass in parks this year. A fungal disease called "Rust" is the reason the grass looks red and the colour sticks to the shoes and socks of anyone walking through the grass. Due to the large amount of rainfall this year, the fungus is quite noticeable in most parks. It is a natural disease that does not cause any health concerns to people or pets.

For further information, you may contact Tanya Steffler, Parks Pest Management Technician at 905-436-5636 ext. 2218.

(Some of the above recipes may be found in Joey Green's Gardening Magic book written by author Joey Green).