

Seven Steps to a healthy, green lawn...

STEP

1

Soil

How do I create healthy soil? A soil test will tell you exactly what your soil needs for a great lawn or garden. It's easy! Get a soil test kit from the University of Maine cooperative extension office in Augusta, 207-633-7546 (\$18).

STEP

2

Mow smart!

Grass height should be 3". Keep mower blades sharp (reduces fungal disease). Leave light clippings on the lawn to provide nutrients and organic material and to encourage deep drought-resistant roots.

STEP

3

Water the right amount, 1 - 1.5" weekly, best in the morning.

Measure 1" by placing a small can under the sprinkler or use a rain gauge. Avoid frequent shallow watering which causes shallow roots and weed growth.

STEP

4

Use caution with fertilizers!

Synthetic chemical fertilizers often harm the microorganisms in the soil. Instead, use compost (ideal), or soybean meal, or ORGANIC "slow-release" fertilizers, Safer Lawn Restore or Ringer Lawn Restore, etc. Be guided by your soil test result. Typically, spreading a ¼" layer of compost in the spring and fall is adequate. *More is not better!*

STEP

5

Aerate compacted soil.

Compacted soil is an "invitation" for weeds. If you can't stick a screwdriver into your soil easily, it is too compacted and air, water and nutrients have trouble getting to the roots. In the fall, rent an aerator with neighbors and get the job done! Or, hire a landscaper to do this.

STEP

6

Overseed with the right variety of grass.

Combine several cool season grasses such as Merion Kentucky bluegrass and red fescue. Or try "Yardscaping Mix" developed by the State of Maine. Or, consider micro clover or Eco-Lawn seed (eartheasy.com, seedland.com, etc.). In spring and fall, overseed bare spots and cover with 1/4" of compost. Grass likes 6 hours of sun/day.

STEP

7

Weeding & pest management

Consider developing tolerance for some weeds! Some are beneficial. For example, clover takes free nitrogen from the atmosphere and distributes it to the grass. Consider adding 10% Mini clover or Dutch white clover which is drought tolerant and crowds out broadleaf weeds. It does well in wet or shady areas and attracts pollinators. Following STEPS 1-6 above, will actually result in fewer weeds.

We look forward to initiating a community conversation about effective alternatives to the use of synthetic pesticides on lawns and gardens. We hope our efforts lead to an appropriate City of Hallowell ordinance to protect our natural resources, our children, and our pets. Thirty Maine cities and towns have already done this!

Hints for Weed & Pest Management

- Hand pull weeds when ground is moist, or use simple garden weeder-tools.
- Use boiling water.
- Flame-weeding machines (ex: "Red Dragon" a small torch using propane)
- Vinegar (acetic acid) or stronger horticultural vinegar, or lemon/limonene in BurnOut II or Avenger, for spot-treating weeds (will kill grass). Vinegar recipe for weeding a patio on a dry sunny day: 1 Gallon vinegar + 2 Tbs. Canola oil + 1 Tbs dish detergent: shake up and pour strategically.
- Herbicidal soaps penetrate the waxy coat on plant leaves so they dry out.
- Corn gluten may help prevent germination of weeds if applied in spring (when forsythia bloom).
- Shrink your lawn! Plant more native Maine plants that attract pollinators: <https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/2500e/> and see Audubon's native plants database: <https://mainenativeplants.org/>

Insects & Other Pests

If necessary, try organic insecticidal soaps, or essential oil products (cedar, rosemary, mint), Diatomaceous Earth, or biologicals such as BT (bacillus thuringiensis). For specific pest control go to Portland's Guide to Organic Pest Management Practices at portlandmaine.gov/pesticides or at beyondpesticides.org/resources/managesafe.

Why go “natural” with lawn and land-care in Hallowell?

- Extensive studies show that commonly used synthetic pesticides and fertilizers have many unintended harmful effects on people, pets, and the natural world. Children are especially vulnerable to these effects.
- Pesticides harm the beneficial organisms that live in healthy soil and “feed” our grass and gardens.
- You do not need synthetic chemicals for a great looking lawn. There are excellent alternatives available: simple organic practices are effective, easy to learn and do not cause harm.

**So what can you do? Start with your own yard.
Keep it simple, keep it safe!**

**The rate of toxic
pesticide use on lawns
and gardens in the U.S.
has skyrocketed.
There are now more
pesticides applied to
lawns and gardens,
per acre, than
agricultural land!**

RESOURCES

“Beyond Pesticides” is a highly regarded site with helpful information, beyondpesticides.org/resources/beyond-pesticides-resources

Grow Green & Healthy Resource List
City of Hallowell, hallowell.gov/office.com, under “Helpful Links”

PRODUCTS

Look for OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) or NOP (National Organic Program) certification.

Ask at your local garden stores, or order from catalogs such as:

- Organic Growers Supply (ME)
fedcoseeds.com/ogs
- North Country Organics (VT)
- Planet Natural (MT)
- Seven Springs Farm (VA)
- groworganic.com (CA)



Grow Green & Healthy Hallowell was started by a group of concerned citizens. We will have an informational table at the Hallowell Farmer's Market. We also plan on public events including educational speakers and best practices demonstrations.

FMI: message us via the Hallowell Conservation Commission Facebook Page.

GROW Green & Healthy HALLOWELL

*Let's create truly healthy outdoor spaces,
soils, streams and a vibrant Kennebec River,
free of toxic pesticides!*

