Interfaith Partners for the CHESAPEAKE

FAITHFUL LAWN CARE

ACTION KIT

C A R I N G

FAITHFUL LAWNCARE

GROUNDED IN FAITH

Our yards and congregation grounds can be inspiring examples of how to live in harmony with the intricate web of life of all God's creation. The more we learn about the impact of our choices on the natural world, the more informed our actions can be to support a healthier ecosystem, our shared home. One way is to learn how we can care for our neighbors, human and more than human, through the ways we care for our yards and grounds.

Common to all major faiths is a principle of the "golden rule" of loving our neighbor, or, "do unto others as you would have others do unto you." Wendell Berry, an author and farmer, expresses this as "Do unto those **downstream** as you would have those **upstream** do unto you." In other words, the way we care for our lawns can be an expression of love of neighbors and the waters we share together with the whole web of life.

PRAYER FOR FAITHFUL LAWN CARE

Creator, guide my hands to create healing and beauty of the land upon which I live. Open my heart and mind to learn how to care for this land so it expresses care for my neighbors.

May the waters from this land flow clean and healthy to sustain all life downstream from me.

Inspire others by my example that they too may go forth and do likewise!
Amen. So be it.

Caring for the natural world is rooted in major faith traditions:

Jewish - Tikkun O'lam, repair and restoration of the world
Christian – stewardship of Creation as an expression of "love thy neighbor"
Buddhist – interconnectedness of all life
Muslim – Tawhid, observing the Oneness of God and responsibility for God's Creation
Sikh - Air is the Teacher, Water is the Father and Earth is the Great Divine Mother of All
Ba'hai - Attributes of God are revealed within every created thing

BENEFITS OF GOING ORGANIC IN YOUR LAWN & GARDEN

- Organic lawns create healthy soil which slows rainwater and prevents erosion.
- Organic lawns purify water by filtering out pollutants.
- Organic lawn maintenance is safe & non-toxic for humans & their pets (and for the whole web of life).
- Organic lawns save money by reducing/eliminating the expense of synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides, pesticides.
- Organic lawns develop natural resistance against pest damage by fortifying the soil, the plants and sparing nature's beneficial insects.
- Organic lawns eliminate toxic runoff into shared water sources.
- Organic lawns balance their own hydration, requiring far less watering even during droughts.
- Organic lawns become self-sustaining, eliminating the lawn's addiction to costly ongoing chemical maintenance.
- Organic lawns spare the earth from climate-damaging synthetic lawn care products.
- Organic lawns are beautiful!

10 ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR A NATURAL LAWN

1. Obtain a Soil Test — Never spend money on any fertilizer or soil amendment without first consulting the results of a soil test first from a qualified commercial lab. The health of the grass is directly related to the components and condition of the soil and the nutrients therein. If you tell the lab up front that your crop is grass, the results will include recommendations on what to add to the soil.

When reviewing your soil test, look most at these three key factors

- Organic matter content: Soil is made from six primary components of sand, silt, and clay particles, along with water, air and organic matter. The organic matter should be 5-8%.
- Calcium-to-magnesium ratio: Most native weeds thrive in situations where calcium is lacking in relation to magnesium, so testing is required to determine if limestone or gypsum should be added since both products are high in calcium. The ideal ratio is 7 to 1.
- Cation exchange capacity (CEC): This is a measure of the soil's ability to hold onto water and nutrients. Soil with a low CEC will leach, and therefore waste water and other resources. Ideal range is 10 to 25 for lawns.

Example Soil Test Result:

Page 1 of 1
Report Number: 10-266-0596
Account Number: 01201

Send To: GLENSTONE
[redacted]
POTOMAC MD 20854

www.allabs.com

A&L Eastern Laboratories, Inc.
7621 Whitepine Road Richmond, Virginia 23237 (804) 743-8401 Fax (804) 271-6446

Grower: GLENSTONE

Farm ID:

SOIL ANALYSIS REPORT

Analytical Method(s): Mehlich 3

Date Received: 09/23/2010 **Date Of Analysis:** 09/24/2010 **Date Of Report:** 09/27/2010

Sample ID / Field ID	Lab Number	Organic Matter %	Organic Matter Rate	Organic Matter ENR lbs/A	Phosphorus Mehlich 3 ppm	Phosphorus Mehlich 3 Rate	Phosphorus Reserve ppm	Phosphorus Reserve Rate	Potassium K ppm	Potassium K Rate	Magnesium Mg ppm	Magnesium Mg Rate	Calcium Ca ppm	Calcium Ca Rate	Sodium Na ppm	Sodium Na Rate	pH Soil pH	pH Buffer Index	Acidity H meq/100g	C.E.C meq/100g
1	21292	1.6	L	73	11	VL MD = 14			146	H MD = 93	183	H MD = 142	948	H MD = 93			7.1		0.0	6.6

Sample ID / Field ID	Percent Base Saturation K %	Mg %	Ca %	Na %	H %	Nitrate NO_3N ppm	Nitrate Rate	Sulfur S ppm	Sulfur Rate	Zinc Zn ppm	Zinc Rate	Manganese Mn ppm	Manganese Rate	Iron Fe ppm	Iron Rate	Copper Cu ppm	Copper Rate	Boron B ppm	Boron Rate	Soluble Salts SS ms/cm	Soluble Salts Rate	Chloride Cl ppm	Chloride Rate	Aluminum Al ppm
1	5.7	23.1	71.8		0.0																			

Values on this report represent the plant available nutrients in the soil. Rating after each value: VL (Very Low), L (Low), M (Medium), H (High), VH (Very High). ENR - Estimated Nitrogen Release. C.E.C. - Cation Exchange Capacity.

Explanation of symbols: % (percent), ppm (parts per million), lbs/A (pounds per acre), ms/cm (milli-mhos per centimeter), meq/100g (milli-equivalent per 100 grams). Conversions: ppm x 2 = lbs/A, Soluble Salts ms/cm x 640 = ppm.

This report applies to sample(s) tested. Samples are retained a maximum of thirty days after testing.

Analysis prepared by: A&L Eastern Laboratories, Inc.

[redacted]

2. Grow the Right Grass — The most common lawn grasses in North America, Kentucky bluegrass and Bermudagrass, also need the most water and fertilizer to grow well. Other species such as perennial ryegrass or turf type tall fescues for sunny areas and chewings red fescue for the shadier spots may be better for the mid-Atlantic region. All grasses need at least three hours of sunshine per day — otherwise we plant truly shade-tolerant plants.

3. Water Well — Morning watering is always recommended so that the surface of the lawn dries off during the day. Water deeply and infrequently so the roots of the grass learn to grow down into the soil to get the water they need.

4. Think of Your Soil as Alive — "Dirt" is what you track into your house. The material that grows your lawn, the soil, is alive with organisms large and small. Nurturing that life through proper use of natural materials will lead to a successful natural lawn.

5. Mow Properly — Recycling your grass clippings by leaving them on the lawn will provide approximately half of your lawn's fertilizer needs for the season. Keep your mower blades sharp. Most lawns should be mowed no lower than 2.5 inches, even higher in the summer.

6. Avoid Synthetic Materials — Fertilizers manufactured in a laboratory often burn lawn grasses and soils. Fertilizers and soil amendments should come from materials that were once living plants or animals, or mined minerals such as lime or sulfur.

7. Add Compost — Nature's most magical soil additive, compost, contains all sorts of beneficial microorganisms that add life to the soil. These organisms will interact with the organic fertilizers to provide the green lawn many of us covet. Compost in liquid form, known as compost tea or extract, should be used in combination with dry compost because the liquid form is available to the soil and grass more quickly. This is especially important during the years of transition from a synthetic system.

8. See Weeds as Messengers — Weeds usually appear on lawns only when something is wrong with the soil. Even if we kill the weeds, they will come back unless we fix the underlying problem within the soil.

9. See Insects as Messengers — A rush of new grass growth caused by synthetic fertilizers will often attract insects. Predatory insects are rarely a problem in a natural system that is in balance. On the other hand, the presence of pollinator insects can indicate a healthy balance.

10. Overseed Regularly — In nature, all plants produce seed to reproduce themselves. In a lawn system, where we mow regularly, grass is not allowed to reproduce and even the healthiest plants get tired. By overseeding in spring or fall, you are introducing robust young plants that will fill in bare areas and compete aggressively against weeds.

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBORS ABOUT ORGANIC LAWN CARE

LEAD BY EXAMPLE — Learn the basics of organic lawn care and begin to demonstrate the results in your own yard. In our keeping-up-with-the-Joneses society, neighbors will begin to ask questions.

KEEP RESOURCES AT THE READY — A brief brochure that summarizes healthy lawncare that talks about the basic aspects of natural lawn care, not making it sound too complicated, might be enough to get someone to pay attention. Later on, you can point them to book known as The Organic Lawn Care Manual or another guide to the process.

CASH COUNTS — Let folks know that natural lawn care programs are often less expensive than their chemical counterparts if you factor in the costs of synthetic chemical fertilizers, weed controls, insecticides, aerating, dethatching, watering, and mowing. In an organic program, you mow less, apply less product, and eliminate aerating, dethatching, and will likely find that you water less frequently.

MEET THEM WHERE IT MATTERS — Most synthetic chemical lawn products say Caution, Warning or Danger and Keep Out of the Reach of Children or Pets. People who care about the health of their children and pets can be pointed to the product labels and realize they may want to avoid the imminent risks. Others may care about pesticide drift into their own homes. Hunters and fisherman may care to hear about the runoff risks to bodies of water and watersheds. Pesticides are especially risky for horses and cattle.

GLOBAL WARMING — Due to the way synthetic lawn chemical fertilizers and pesticides are manufactured, utilizing copious amounts of natural gas to heat hydrogen in the Haber-Bosch process, lawn care contributes significantly to climate change even before lawns are mowed and watered. Organic lawn care recycles products from the waste stream such as fish, seaweed, compost to function as fertilizers.

Additional Spiritual Reflection

In many faith traditions, plants and animals are viewed as teachers or messengers, so that we humans might learn how to live in a balanced way with the Earth to sustain life.

> But ask the animals, and they will teach you,
> or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you;
> ask the plants of the earth,
> and they will teach you,
> and the fish in the sea
> will declare to you.
> ~Job 12:7-12

Robin Wall Kimmerer, a Botanist and Potawatomi tribe member speaks of plants as teachers, what we can learn from them as models. In some Native languages the term for plants translates to "**those who take care of us.**" She invites us to consider our relationship to the land and waters of our local environment: Being naturalized to place means to live as if this is the land that feeds you, as if these are the streams from which you drink, that build your body and fill your spirit. We can do this by: "Paying attention … a form of reciprocity with the living world, receiving the gifts with open eyes and open heart."

With an open heart, we can express our reciprocity, gratitude, and love for the local lands and waters of creation by practicing organic methods of lawncare. As Episcopal Bishop Eugene Sutton of Baltimore says, "What we do with water is a spiritual matter." Our methods of lawncare which can foster health, restoration, justice and create beauty in the Chesapeake Bay watershed are a spiritual matter, too.

Blessings upon your care of God's good Earth!

This Activity Kit was developed in partnership with Paul Tukey, Director of Environmental Stewardship at the Glenstone Museum, and the Multi-Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions of Frederick County (MACS).