

ABCs of Organic Lawn Care

The goal:

Feed the soil, not the plants--a different way of thinking about your lawn.”

The benefits:

Aside from mowing, minimal maintenance the peace of mind from knowing that you're not using chemicals with warning labels. We have well water in Madison, so what you put on your lawn does go into the aquifer.

Know your soil.

To find out your pH, order a soil test kit from Rutgers, www.njaes.rutgers.edu. It costs \$20 and comes with access to a master gardener hot line for lawn questions.

Fight weeds with corn gluten.

Available at Home Depot, corn gluten will knock back crab grass and will be about 65% effective the first year. Meanwhile you can build up soil health so that grass can compete favorably with the weeds and keep them in balance.

Fertilize with compost, not chemical fertilizers.

Fortunately, compost is easy for Morris County residents to obtain. It can be picked up for free at the Morris County Municipal Authorities location in Parsippany (www.mcmua.com) or delivered for a fee. A 5000 square foot lawn requires four cubic feet of compost, applied a half-inch thick.

Keep your grass tall.

If your grass is 2.5. to 3.5 inches, it will shade out weeds.

Cut it and leave it.

Grass clippings are 80 to 85 percent water. They contain valuable nutrients and decompose quickly, disappearing when they filter down to the soil.

