

**my Sisters' Garden** organic lawn & landscaping



Think Global. Think Green. Grow Strong.

## Organic Lawn Care and Organic Landscaping in Hampton Roads

My Sisters' Garden Organic Lawn and Landscaping is one of the few TRUE organic lawn care companies in Hampton Roads. Providing quality customer service and taking care of Mother Nature is our top priority, servicing the areas of Virginia Beach, Norfolk and Chesapeake Virginia.

### **No chemicals! All Natural Lawn Care and Landscaping! Safe for the whole family!**

#### **Our Mission**

Our philosophy is to always be a responsible contributing member of the community and stewards of our environment. To always utilize sound practices to create ecologically safe environments for our clients. To always meet or exceed customer expectations in all aspects of service, while maintaining the highest levels of professionalism. To create and maintain an intimate relationship with our clients as well as serve them with integrity, knowledge and creative ability. We believe it is our responsibility to guide our clients and help them to make the right choices to meet their needs and budget.

*"Treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents; it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors; we borrow it from our Children."  
~ Ancient Indian Proverb*

My Sisters' Garden provides the foundation for a healthy lawn and landscape in order to meet the challenges and receive the gifts that Mother Nature provides. Our companies' highest objective is to improve the Knowledge, health and overall joy of our clients. We approach every situation with the knowledge that each action taken not only impacts life within the boundaries of the property but beyond. We believe in the power of connection to the food we eat, the fresh flowers we place on our tables and the practice of growing a healthy lawn and landscape. Our company believes in supporting local and nothing could be more local than your own yard! Every Lawn and Landscape decision has the power to enhance outdoor living spaces, produce delightful views, or remedy problems. Gardens are purely magical places to be, for us and for you. But in this decision process, the grander picture, the environment, must be addressed. Here in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, the largest of any coastal water body in the world, the land-to-water ratio (14:1). Each action on a plot of land can have such a significant impact on the health of the waters within this watershed as well as all living things of which it is a part.

My Sisters' Garden is passionate about doing things naturally and to the highest standards, for the health of both our clients and our environment. Just like the days of old, our company draws from the never-ending wisdom of nature and listens to the soil and the plants as well as the conditions of the seasons to grow the healthiest lawns and landscapes year after year. We are committed to designing sustainable landscapes and use an ecologically sound approach to our designs. Our company designs properties with many ecological considerations in mind including ease of maintenance and sustainability, providing natural habitats and use of native plants.

My Sisters' Gardens leading light Heather Driscoll is an accredited Northeast Organic Farmers Association (NOFA) Landscape Professional and was first for the state of Virginia! Heather has completed Sustainable Landscape Practices with the city of Virginia Beach. Heather completed the first Natural Lawn & Turf Management Training For Lawn Care Professionals taught by Chip Osborne of Osborne Organics.

## **Organic Lawn Care and Organic Landscaping Resources**

New Earth Farm <http://newearthfarm.org/>  
Natural and organic products for the farm and garden and supplies

Green Alternatives <http://www.greenalternativesstore.com/>  
Fun eco-products and green alternatives

Elizabeth River Projects <http://elizabethriver.org/>  
Preventing Pollution!

Lynnhaven River Now <http://www.lynnhavenrivernow.org/>  
Restoring a legend

Beyond Pesticides <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/>  
No need to use chemicals!

NOFA Organic Land Care <http://www.organiclandcare.net/>

## **My Sisters' Garden Organic Lawn Care and Landscaping**

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## 12 Hints for a Wonderful Organic Lawn

### 1. **Revolutionize The Way You Think**

Think of your soil in terms of any other living thing. There is a whole web of life beneath your feet! Organisms in the soil are alive and have the same needs we do: to breathe, drink, eat, digest and expel waste.

### 2. **Test the Soil**

Do not apply any form of fertilization before you test your soil! Applying fertilizers without the knowledge of what your soil requires is damaging to the environment, your lawn and landscape as well as your wallet!

### 3. **Mow Your Lawn High**

Mow grass at a height of 3-3.5". Mowing high is the best herbicide. The longer the blade of grass equals a deeper root system and less photosynthesis. With a deeper grass root system the more drought resistant the lawn will become.

### 4. **Leave the Clippings Where They Fall**

Clippings consist of about 90% water, so they decompose almost immediately after hitting the ground. Clippings left in place will give you 1 pound of Nitrogen per 1000 sq feet a year and are a valuable source of organic matter.

### 5. **Right Plant, Right Place**

Know your site and soil requirements as well as personal preferences before choosing a grass variety. Is your plot sunny? Shady? Is the soil wet? Dry? Clay Soil? Sandy Soil? Will the grass area be a play area for the kids? Know your facts. Be sure to not buy a monoculture of seed. Purchase a seed variety.

### 6. **Water Deeply and Infrequently**

Lawns only need an inch of water a week. You can use a tuna can to measure the inch. Be sure to always water grass in the mornings and not the evenings. Watering in the evening opens grass up to the possibility of fungus and disease. Watering mid-day evaporates much of the water before it reaches the ground. Water the full inch all at once, once a week. If you have an irrigation system make sure to have a rain sensor and an automatic shutoff.

### 7. **Mow Sensibly**

Leave grass clippings on the lawn, always mow with sharp blades and don't remove more than 1/3 off the top of the grass at each mow.

### 8. **Become acquainted with Your Weeds**

Weeds are Mother Nature's way of informing you about what is going on below the surface. Killing them only kills the messenger it will not correct the problem. Weeds are instrumental in making us aware of what is happening beneath our feet.

9. **Aerate**

Aerating opens the soil and lets it breathe. It permits greater movement of water, fertilizer and air by increasing the speed of decomposition of the grass clippings and enhancing deep root growth.

10. **Top Dress with Compost**

This is the best thing you can do for your soil. Good, tested compost is full of beneficial biology and organic matter and the results are phenomenal. Compost tea is far easier to apply and full of biology

11. **Learn to Live with a Few Weeds, or Wild Herbs**

The single most valuable early spring wildflower is the dandelion. If a beehive survives the winter, bees will be safe from starvation so long as they can stay alive until dandelions bloom. Along with dandelions, bees thrive on a variety of weeds in lawns, including clover and plantain. Keep them in the lawn as they are there to help the bees and the bees in turn will help keep our food supply bountiful. You too can benefit from dandelions. They are great for salads and can even be made into syrup or wine. However, if you're adamant for weed removal you can pull them by hand or kill them with vinegar.

12. **Allow for Imperfections**

An organic lawn is not going to look like a blanket of beautiful green blanket across your landscape all year. Cool season grasses will look better in the spring and fall when temperatures are best for these varieties. Cool season grasses prefer would prefer to go dormant in the summer when temperatures are really hot. Warm season grass varieties thrive and look best in the heat of summer and become dormant in the cold winter temperatures.

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## Recycling Grass Clippings

The long-held beliefs of the days of old that grass clippings left on a lawn cause excessive thatch buildup and smother the grass, are false. Grass clippings are actually good for the lawn. From now on, don't bag your lawn clippings — recycle them back into the lawn.

Grass clippings from just 1000 square feet of lawn can generate 300 pounds of waste that would be deposited in a landfill according to the California Integrated Waste Management Board, Clippings quickly decompose and return the nutrients to the soil naturally, slow water loss through evaporation and reduce the needs for fertilization. It make caring for your lawn easier and can reduce mowing time by 50% by not having to bag clippings!

To recycle grass clippings properly keep mower blades sharp and only mow when the grass is dry. You most likely already own a mulching mower. If you own a traditional mower you can change out your mower blade. Refer to your owner's manual or contact a local lawnmower dealer to find out if a retrofit kit is needed. Some mowers are pre-designed to mulch and also provide an attachment for bagging.

To get the most advantages out of recycling grass clippings on the lawn:

- Mow only when the lawn is dry and never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf surface area with each mowing.
- ALWAYS use sharp mower blade. Dull blade bruise and tear the grass plant, increasing disease susceptibility,
- Aerate your lawn. Aerating opens up the soil and lets is breathe. It permits greater movement of water, fertilizer, and air by increasing the speed of decomposition of the grass clippings and enhancing deep root growth.
- Use proper watering methods! Lawns require one inch of water a week to maintain green color and active growth. Make sure you follow the proper lawn maintenance and mowing height for your type of turf grass.

Recycling grass clipping back into your yard is a simple, easy opportunity for every homeowner and business to do something good for the environment. It is a responsible environmental practice and an opportunity to reduce waste. It takes less time and energy than bagging and dragging clipping to the curb and saves our landfills!

## Lawn Care

Grass, lawns, yards, grass and turf grass: everyone has a name for that green space, but what it really is, is your own little piece of the earth. You own it, you take care of it, and you're responsible for it. Your lawn needs you! And, you need your lawn.

Lawns have become a major player in our eco-system, covering about 50 million acres in America (2003 estimate). Every action taken in your yard is multiplied thousands of times over. It's important to do things right and not because that's the way you've always done it.

Take steps such as:

- Taking Soil Sample before fertilizing to determine what the soil in your yard actually requires
- Being careful and not using synthetic fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides
- Watering the smart way

Each and every one of us can make a difference by following a few easy steps. You can go a long way in improving your environmental impact, making your lawn even more efficient and protecting the web of life within it.

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