

# CLEAN BUSINESS IN A WATERSHED



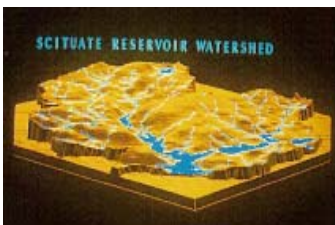
## The Scituate Reservoir Watershed Education Program

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### Passing On Clean Water

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Above is a 3-D image of the Scituate Reservoir Watershed.

Portions of Foster, Glocester, Johnston and Scituate comprise this land area.

The Scituate Reservoir, lying in the lowest part of this land area, catches all water flowing over this watershed.

The Scituate Reservoir is a major source of drinking water in Rhode Island.

#### Contents:

March Issue, *Volume 12*: The Cost of Green Lawns and Healthy Landscapes

July Issue, *Volume 13*: Chemically feeding the grass vs. Naturally nourishing the soil

November Issue, *Volume 14*: Investing in Native Plants

## are you feeding the grass OR nourishing the soil?

In other words, are you spending unnecessary money or making a wise investment?

In the March Issue, we reminded you that lawn maintenance can be expensive and challenged you to consider natural, more ecologically friendly ways to cut those expenditures. You may have gotten a soil test. You may have discussed natural techniques with your landscaper to ensure a vibrant landscape with lower maintenance costs. You should be seeing some pay off for the initial legwork you've done. In this publication, we want to focus on natural, or organic, ways to further save money and create a vibrant, healthy landscape for your business.

Our current culture has made it difficult to believe that lawns can survive without chemical inputs. This is simply untrue. Grass lawns CAN survive without fertilizers or pesticides; and your lawn will likely be more healthy as a result. According to the *Organic Landscape Alliance*, "the guiding principle of organic lawn care is to nourish the soil...Restoring and protecting soil health is crucial for maintaining a lush, naturally pest and disease resistant lawn...a healthy soil is alive."

([www.organiclandscape.org/en/Fact\\_Sheets\\_28/items/1.html](http://www.organiclandscape.org/en/Fact_Sheets_28/items/1.html))

Organic landscaping sounds ideal, but will the effort save you money? If you consider the chemical inputs required to "feed your traditional lawn" versus "nourish your soil", the answer is YES. If you consider the time it takes to maintain a traditional lawn versus nourish and encourage natural plant health, the answer is YES. Understanding your landscape and looking for natural ways to enhance what already exists will prove to be very cost-effective.

#### Chemical Lawn Care

- \*low biological activity in the soil
- \*focus on correcting problems with chemical inputs
- \*weeds killed by chemical pesticides
- \*chemical insecticides and fungicides used to eliminate insects & diseases
- \*chemical fertilizers increase a lawn's susceptibility to thatch & drought problems
- \*lawn becomes dependent on ever-increasing chemical inputs

#### Organic Lawn Care

- \*high biological soil activity
- \*focus on prevention through appropriate cultural methods (i.e. high mowing)
- \*undesirable plants outcompeted by healthy grass plants, forming thick cover
- \*harmful insects and diseases kept at tolerable levels by maintaining healthy soil & grass
- \*extensive root system makes turf resistant to drought & active soil life controls thatch
- \*soil & plant health improves

(Information taken from the Organic Landscape Alliance Fact Sheet 1, *Organic Lawn Care*)

*The Cooperative Extension at URI provides eight strategies for creating beautiful, healthy and ecologically friendly landscapes.*

### **Basic Strategies for creating a Healthy Landscape**

<http://www.uri.edu/ce/healthylandscapes/tips/basics.html>

- 1 choose the right plant for the right spot
- 2 recycle your yard waste
- 3 use fertilizers and pesticides responsibly
- 4 water wisely
- 5 reduce runoff from your yard and increase groundwater recharge
- 6 reduce soil erosion. keep it planted and mulched
- 7 pick up after your pets
- 8 use and dispose of fuels and hazardous products properly

### **How can Strategies #2-4 save your business money and create a healthy landscape?**



#### **■ Recycling your Yard Waste**

- > Grass clippings, leaves and plant prunings are a valuable source of mulch & nutrients for lawns & gardens.
- > Composting yard waste is an effective way to cut the amount spent on mulch and other lawn additives.

#### **■ Use Fertilizers & Pesticides Responsibly**

The most cost effective way to use fertilizers and pesticides is to use them:

- > at the right time,
- > in the right amount,
- > in the right place and
- > for the right reason.

#### **■ Water Wisely**

- > Save \$ on your water bill by watering deeply.
- > Water your lawns & gardens in the early morning or early evening once a week, for as long as it takes to soak plants in 1 inch of water. One long, thorough soaking each week will encourage deeper root growth in your plants and enable plant sustainability.

Other helpful ideas:

- ◆ Consider planting drought tolerant and/or native plants, especially in very dry spots of your landscape where the soil is sandy. Likewise, create rain gardens with wetland plants in frequently wet areas.
- ◆ Use rain barrels or cisterns to collect rainwater to use for future irrigation.

### ***Suggested Summer-Fall Lawn Maintenance Schedule***

#### ***July & August***

- ◆ You may allow your lawn to go dormant during drought. It will become green after rain.

#### ***September & October***

- ◆ Best time to seed (generously).
- ◆ Fertilize sparingly if needed or top dress with 1/4 inch compost.
- ◆ Aerate if soil is compacted.
- ◆ Lime if an autumn soil test finds pH lower than ~6.8

(Information taken from the Massachusetts Pesticide Awareness Collaborative's brochure, *Healthy Lawns and Landscapes*)