

Summary and Key Points

Green Gardening & Lawn Care

Chapter 1 Getting Started

Summary:

Four Principles:

1. **Observation:**
Understand your lawn. Know where the sun falls, where water puddles and what kind of soil you have. Then make better decisions about how to look after it.
2. **Trust in Mother Nature:**
Mother Nature provides many tools to help us. Learn the ways in which the insects in your garden are beneficial for it.
3. **Don't Over-Treat:**
When you treat your lawn with chemicals, you're in a rush to fix problems right away. In natural lawn care, be patient, observe and let nature take its course.
4. **Be Patient:**
We're dealing with nature, you can't force growth. Often, things self-correct and you will be able to relax and enjoy your garden.

Soil is the first component to address for a natural garden.

Good garden soil is vital to a healthy natural lawn.

Chapter 2 Lawn Care

Summary:

Lawn mowing

- Proper lawn mowing techniques encourage healthy deep-rooted grass.
- The recommended height for a lawn is 2 ½ to 3 inches (6.3 to 7.6 cm).
- The longer the blade of grass, the deeper the root.
- Long cuts shade out weed seeds.
- Long cutting conserves moisture.
- You never want to cut more than one-third of the length of the blade at any one time; any more will actually stress the grass.
- Leaving mulch clippings on the grass is an excellent idea. It returns nitrogen to the lawn.
- Sharpen your lawn mower at the beginning of the season.
- Use a push mower for smaller lawns. They're great for exercise!

Getting rid of weeds

- The best defense against weeds is proper cutting, watering and fertilizing.
- Corn gluten has weed seed-suppressing abilities and is especially effective for dandelions and crabgrass. It can be applied in both spring and fall.
- Get rid of dandelions by over-seeding, long cutting, hand weeding and applying corn gluten.

Aeration and De-thatching

- Thatch is built-up matted organic material that lies on the surface of the soil and prohibits water and nutrients from getting into the soil. It feels spongy underfoot.
- Aeration improves the air within your soil. Using a pitchfork or other tools to poke holes in the soil is not effective. The Aeration machine removes coils from the soil, allowing it to breathe. It is recommended that you hire a garden service for this, although Aeration machines are also available to rent or purchase.

Lawn Watering

- Good watering techniques are an important part of lawn maintenance.
- Watering properly and deeply encourages healthy grass growth.
- A rain gauge collects natural rainwater. About 1 inch (2.5 cm) of water is sufficient for a week.
- Early morning is a good time to water your lawn.
- One hour of watering should be sufficient.
- A natural lawn has the ability to conserve water better than a conventional lawn.

Chapter 3 Garden Bed

Summary:

- Good soil and plant selection are important to a healthy garden bed. Do your research and find the best plants for the location.
- Consider native plants, as they are more resistant to insects and may be more drought-resistant.
- Group plants together that have similar watering needs.
- Annuals sometimes require more watering. Cut down on watering by putting annuals in a pot and using a watering can to water them.

Mulch

- Mulch helps to conserve moisture in the garden bed. Mulch is any kind of material that covers all exposed soil.
- Mulch moderates the temperature of the soil, conserves moisture and helps to suppress weed growth.
- There are two types of mulch: inorganic mulch, such as rock, and organic mulch, comprised of cocoa beans, straw, leaves and other organic materials.
- Mulch should be 2 to 3 inches (5 to 7.6 cm) thick in the garden bed and should be added to new plant material.
- Save raked leaves in the fall to make mulch, and then add to your composter with kitchen scraps.
- Leaves on the grass can be mulched into the lawn itself during final cut.

Watering

- A soaker hose is a hose with little perforations in it. When it is turned on, water steadily drips out of it.
- Soaker hoses reduce water wastage and ensure deep watering to the roots.
- Make your own soaking device - poke holes through a garbage can and place it in garden. Water will slowly drip out of bucket over a period of time. Great to leave while you're away on vacation!
- You will need to water plants weekly.

Planting

- Spring and fall are the best times to plant.
- Protect your root bulbs. Dig holes slightly bigger than the bulb plant, then place the plant inside, heel down earth and cover it with your foot to remove air.
- Water with a soaker hose. Continue watering weekly.
- Mulching helps keep weeds suppressed in and around new plantings.
- Check on plants to make sure they are doing well.

Insects

- If insects are attacking a plant, you may have to adjust your watering technique. Also, try to determine what the insect is. Your mulching technique may also have to be improved.
- Often pest problems will self-correct!

Companion Planting

- Different plants have different nutrient requirements. Plants with high nitrogen requirements thrive when planted together with those that have lower nitrogen requirements.
- Check your local bookstore, library and the internet for more information on companion planting.

When picking plants remember to:

1. Observe your area.
 2. Pick appropriate plants that meet your requirements.
 3. Research and talk to local nursery and garden staff.
- After you've planted, regular care, weekly watering with a soaker hose, and adding mulch will help suppress weeds and keep roots cool during summer months.
 - Remember a natural lawn is safe and healthy for you, your family and your pets!

Chapter 4 Flowers

Summary:

- Leave stalks and seed heads on the plants instead of cutting the flower head - it can be a food source for birds over the winter!
- Using chemicals can be high maintenance. Nature does fine without a lot of help.
- Relax. Enjoy. Experiment. If you have to adjust things, there's always next season!

Chapter 5 Pest Control

Summary:

- Many bugs are beneficial to your garden; they aerate soil, pollinate plants, add fertility and prey on nuisance pests.
- Be patient. Pest problems are often self-correcting.
- Two common pests on the lawn are grubs and chinch bugs.
- Nematodes are naturally occurring microscopic organisms that prey on grubs. If over-seeding and top dressing do not work to solve the problem, you may want to try nematodes. You can purchase nematodes in the lawn and garden section of your store.
- Apply nematodes in the fall, making sure to water your lawn before application.
- The natural approach to lawn care involves using a variety of species and letting nature take its course.
- Some grass seeds have naturally occurring endophytes – fungus that certain insect pests find distasteful.
- Horticultural oil and insect dust are two natural products that can be used against insects.
- Pesticide use varies from country to country but the consensus is that eliminating toxins will be better for the planet.
- Maintenance tips for weeds: 1. over-seeding to ensure a thick dense lawn; 2. long cutting to shade out weed seeds; and 3. deep watering to encourage deep roots.
- A hand weeder is a handy tool to “pop” out weeds.
- With a weeder, go in and around root, loosen soil and pop out the weed. Over-seed in any areas with grass.
- A healthy natural lawn is the best defense against pests.

Chapter 6 Composting

Summary:

- Composting reduces garden waste and produces nutrient material for your garden.
- Composting is an easy and ecological practice you can start in your own home!
- Kitchen scraps, coffee grinds and yard waste turn into humus, which provides nutrients for your soil.
- Thirty percent of household waste can be composted.
- Do not place meat, bones or fat in the composter. This will keep rodents away.
- Vegetable, fruit peelings and yard waste are best for the composter.
- Collect yard waste and dump in the composter.
- Screen your compost to separate anything that has not decomposed.
- The end result is a top dressing as rich as anything you could buy in the store!
- Composting is very cost effective for producing your own soil and significantly reduces the garbage sent to landfill.

Chapter 7 Tools

Summary:

Recommended tools:

1. Wheelbarrow - for moving things around your yard, carrying tools and collecting yard waste.
2. Spade or garden shovel.
3. Pitch fork - for moving and mixing loose materials.
4. Hand held seeder or broadcast seeder.
5. A rake.
6. Lawn mower - try a push mower for smaller lawns
7. A good quality pruner
8. Lopper - for cutting branches with wider circumferences.
9. Weeder or crack weeder.
10. De-thatching rake.

Chapter 8 Rain Barrel

Summary:

- A rain barrel collects excess water from a roof during rainfall.
- A great way to conserve water is to wash your car or water your garden with water from your rain barrel instead of using municipally-treated water.
- Rainwater is softer, chlorine-free and better for plants.
- Rain barrels are easy to connect and have a screen to keep mosquitoes away.

Chapter 9 Soil and Fertilizer

Summary:

- There are two ways to help improve soil fertility in and around your garden: top soil and fertilizer.

Topsoil

- Topsoil material improves structure and adds nutrition to soil. Examples of topsoil are: sand, limestone, well-rotted manure and seaweed compost.
- Add one-quarter to one-half inch (.67 to 1.25 cm) of topsoil to an existing lawn, rake it in, and water lightly.
- Topsoil can be used to repair crevices or patchy areas on your lawn.
- The best time to add topsoil is in the spring or fall.
- Topsoil can also be used in combination with seeding and aerating.

Fertilizer

- Fertilizer contains three main ingredients: 1. nitrogen; 2. phosphorous; and 3. potassium.
- Apply organic fertilizer with a broadcast spreader for even distribution.
- More is not better with fertilizer. Read the instructions carefully.

Seeding or over-seeding

- Seeding or over seeding is often done after applying topsoil. Over-seeding is spreading seed on an existing lawn.
- When you're caring for your lawn naturally, over-seeding is important to keep your turf nice and dense.
- Check your growing area before making your grass selection.
- Grass seed can be applied by a broadcast spreader, a handheld spreader or by hand. Rake after applying seed.
- Cutting your lawn before seeding helps to ensure grass seed reaches the soil.
- Grass will germinate in 10 to 14 days. Keep area lightly watered during this time.

Soil determines the long-term well being of plants in your garden. Soil health, top dressing and fertilizer are fundamental to good soil in a healthy, natural garden.

Chapter 10 Seasonal Lawn Care Tips

Summary:

Early spring

1. Wait until ground is dry before starting.
2. Make sure mower blades are well sharpened and tools are nice and clean.
3. Consider over-seeding your lawn, and repairing and top dressing patches that may have weakened over the winter months.

Late spring

1. Consider adding organic fertilizer.
2. This is a good season to plant.

Summer

1. Raise height of mower.
2. Monitor for insect pests.
3. Keep plants and trees well watered with soaker hose.

Fall

1. A good time to aerate along with over-seeding and a top dressing.
2. Later in the fall, you can put on your final fertilizer to ensure strong root growth.
3. Collect leaves for compost or for mulch in garden bed.
4. Clean tools and get ready for the winter.

Chapter 11 Planting Bulbs

Summary:

- A hole about 6 to 8 inches deep is best for planting bulbs.
- Plant the bulbs in groups.
- Use mulch over bulb planting.

Resources:

Contact your local stores, local municipal councils, local National Gardening Organizations, and local native plant societies.

Internet sites:

Safe Lawns <http://www.safelawns.org>

Wild About Gardening, Canadian Wildlife Federation
<http://www.wildaboutgardening.org/index.asp>

Pesticide Action Network: <http://www.panna.org/panna/>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Landscaping with Natives:
<http://www.epa.gov/greenacres/>

Responsible Pest Management <http://www.pestinfo.ca/index/php3/lang/EN>

Books

How to Get Your Lawn & Garden off Drugs: A Basic Guide to Pesticide-Free Gardening in North America. Carole Rubin, Foreword by Robert Bateman, 2003

The Organic Gardener's Handbook of Natural Insect and Disease Control: A Complete, Problem-Solving Guide to Keeping Your Garden and Yard Healthy without Chemicals. Edited by Barbara W. Ellis, Fern M. Bradley, 1997 Edited by Barbara W. Ellis, Fern M. Bradley 1997

Common Sense Pest Control. Least-toxic solutions for your home, garden, pets and community. Edited by William Olkowski, Sheila Daar, Helga Olkowski, 1991

The Ann Lovejoy Handbook of Northwest Gardening: Natural Care and Sustainable Design. Anne Lovejoy, 2003

Redesigning the American Lawn. F. Herbert Bormann, Diana Balmori, Gordon T. Geballe, 2001

Cheryl Shour Biography



Cheryl Shour earned an Honors Bachelor of Science degree and an MBA from the University of Toronto. After seven years at a Canadian chartered bank and armed with a growing personal interest in the environment, in 1993 Cheryl launched her own company, one of Toronto's first 100% organic lawn and garden services.

Her company expanded to offer a unique selection of healthy products for use indoors and out. Cheryl was responsible for the organic lawn division and company operations and she served as Chief Environmental Officer until 2004 when the company was sold.

Cheryl now brings her unique experiences to her role as an environmental consultant specializing in the implementation of transitioning programs, training and development in the area of chemical free lawn care, pesticide by-laws and educational outreach. She was lead author of Toronto Public Health's Guide to Natural Lawn and Garden Care, has written several educational brochures and consults with private companies and municipalities. She has been featured extensively in the media, has appeared in several videos on the subject, speaks extensively on issues of organic lawn care and transitioning green spaces off of chemicals and has presented to the Federal Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

Cheryl also applies her knowledge and skills about environmental issues to her volunteer efforts. She was a longstanding Board member of the Toronto Green Community and served both as Chair and Executive Director. She was also the founding President of the Organic Landscape Alliance (OLA), a trade association for organic horticulture and in that capacity sat as an industry representative on the Toronto Pesticides Subcommittee that implemented a pesticide reduction plan on city owned lands. She is currently an alternate member of the Don Watershed Regeneration Council.

Cheryl can be contacted at: cherylshour@rogers.com and on Facebook.



About Shannon Leroux:

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Shannon is a talented actress who has been featured on CTV & Global Television, the History Channel and a variety of independent films. She has performed in theatre, industrial videos, and contributed to many commercials and voiceovers. She is represented by her agent Colin McMurray, who can be reached at ColinMcMurray@rogers.com.

Along with her many acting credits, Shannon enlisted in the 1st Air Defense unit of the Canadian Forces and attained the qualification of Firearms Certified marksman status. She is also a group 2 fitness instructor and competitive swimmer and has attained titles as both a Pro Figure Athlete and Pro Fitness Model with the WNSO Fame Organization.

Special thanks to the Leroux family for their participation in this video series.

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