

BEST PRACTICES



How Can Practicing Natural Lawn Care Help Salmon?

Salmon need cool, clean oxygen-rich water to thrive. But what does this have to do with natural lawn care? Natural lawn care is based on the principle that healthy lawns grow in healthy soil. Healthy soils reduce stormwater runoff and help cool and clean rainwater by soaking it into the ground. They also filter pollutants that could otherwise end up in our streams, lakes and Puget Sound.

Follow these basics tips to have healthy soil and lawn:

1. If needed, use “natural organic” or “slow-release” fertilizer in September or April.
2. Aerate your lawn yearly in spring or fall to help water soak in and improve air movement in the soil.
3. Top-dress your lawn with $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ inch layer of fine compost. Scatter compost with a shovel, then rake it out evenly filling aeration holes and ensuring the blades of grass are sticking up and not bent over under the layer of compost.
4. Mulch-mow to “feed” your lawn with nutrients from decomposing grass.
5. Test your soils: Your soil may be too acidic and low in calcium, which affects how easily your grass can access nutrients in the soil. Spread lime in the fall every 3-4 years to help spark microbial activity in your soil. A soil test will tell you exactly what’s needed.

Natural Lawn Care Practices = Using Less Water

Use less water on your lawn and help our streams and salmon. Did you know that by cutting your grass taller you can use less water? A taller and thicker lawn retains moisture better, so you won’t have to water as often. Set your mower height between 2 to 3 inches making sure to cut no more than one-third of the grass blade each time you mow.

Save on your water bill by making every drop count:

1. Water 1” per week, spread over two waterings.
2. Don’t overwater—overwatering can invite disease and pest problems and create shallow root systems.
3. Allow root zone to partially dry out between waterings.
4. Apply water only as fast as it can enter the soil surface.
5. Water deeply to encourage deep rooting and drought tolerance.
6. Water when it is cool to avoid evaporation (early morning is best).
7. Let your lawn go golden (dormant). When you let your lawn go dormant, make sure to water 1 inch each rainless month to ensure your lawn recovers once the rain returns.



Avoid using “Weed-and-Feed” and other pesticides

1. Weed & Feed is a pesticide! It typically combines a quick-release fertilizer (bad for your lawn and the environment) with a mixture of hazardous herbicides (worse).
2. Weed & Feed products not only damage soil and lawn health and pollute our waterways but they can also be toxic for children and pets.
3. Pesticides often get tracked into the house, bringing toxins indoors.
4. Accept a few “weeds” in your lawn. Plants like clover and dandelions are beneficial to bees.

If You Don’t Use It Lose It

Go lawnless and consider naturescaping your yard! Join Stream Team and WSU for our hands-on Naturescaping Workshop where you’ll learn how you can have a beautiful lawn-free yard that is water and wildlife friendly.

Source: Stream Team News, Spring 2020