

## **Ripple Effect # 51**

### **TRUE GREEN**

What is “true green” when it comes to lawns? The lushest of carpets of the deepest hue that makes our neighbors envy us—and almost afraid to walk on it? Or a piece of ground that contributes to the “green” of our wider environment? Although the latter definition is a moral crusade for a few, others are moving towards it simply because they have “kids and a dog.” And many others—as many as 50% in a survey by the National Gardening Association—expect to be using organic methods on their lawns in the future. At least half of us, it appears, recognize that we need to do our part in keeping our environment “green.”

Those who have forged ahead in organic approaches to their yards have taken one of two routes—or a combination of the two. Some have turned to systems of organic fertilizers and weed deterrents for their lawns, or to lawn services that offer organic products and focus on soil microbiology to keep healthy lawns. Others have chosen the route of replacing parts of their lawns, parts not used for “sitting or baseball,” with plants that serve other functions: trees and shrubs to provide privacy; ground cover, perennials, or native plants to add interest; herb or vegetable gardens to provide fresh food.

For whatever part of your lawn that you would like to maintain as lawn, here are a few suggestions about ways to keep it both healthy and “greener”:

- Aerate the grass in the spring to improve air exchange.
- Raise the lawn mower to 3 inches to promote deeper roots.
- Use fertilizers containing natural ingredients, such as corn gluten meal, soybean meal, blood meal, or feather meal. Use citric-based herbicides.
- Ask your lawn service about the ingredients in its products. Does the lawn service provide a comprehensive program for your lawn?
- Get rid of weed patches by putting black plastic over them for a season. You might, in turn, cover the plastic with wood chips and lawn furniture, disguising the whole effort - and providing another seating area in your yard!
- If you are just establishing a lawn, use a mixture of grasses that don't deplete nutrients or consider an alternative variety that requires less frequent mowing.

You may have to be patient—in waiting for local stores and garden centers to begin stocking organic products or, when using alternatives to quick release chemical products, in getting instant results. But isn't the result—a “true green” lawn and yard that benefits your children, your neighbors, pets and wildlife, and the environment as a whole—worth it?

The survey result and suggestions for maintaining a lawn are found in the April 25, 2007, Home and Garden Section of the Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN, *Star Tribune*.

Until the next Ripple Effect,

The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC)

The RRBC is a grassroots organization that is a chartered not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of Manitoba, North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota law. Our offices in Moorhead, MN and Winnipeg, MB can be reached at 218-291-0422 and 204-982-7254, or you can check out our website at [www.redriverbasincommission.org](http://www.redriverbasincommission.org).

