

Ripple Effect # 64

LAWN DROUGHT ALERT

“The median strips have gone to straw, baseball diamonds have lost their shimmer of green, and weeds thrive where grass once flourished.” This is how the Summer 2007 newsletter of SafeLawns.org, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting natural lawn care and grounds maintenance, described much of the United States earlier this summer.

It is also starting to apply to much of the Red River Basin, which, following a bout of excess precipitation earlier in the season, is experiencing minimal precipitation during the heated-up days of July and August.

In response to the many questions that they receive about maintaining a lawn during drought conditions, SafeLawns recommends organic lawn management techniques.

By adding organic materials to your lawn rather than chemical fertilizers, SafeLawns explains, your soil will act like a sponge and hold onto the water that Mother Nature does supply. Even in Dallas, Texas, where summer temperatures rise to nearly 110 degrees and restrictions limit watering, a lawn-care company reports that their organic lawns “stay pretty much green.”

Interested? Here are some pointers that can get you started towards a drought-tolerant lawn:

- Use composts and organic fertilizers;
- Leave grass clippings on the grass to help the soil retain moisture;
- Apply a nutrient-packed “compost tea” that you can “brew” yourself; you’ll find instructions on SafeLawns.org website;
- Use water saving sprinklers and timers and water deeply and infrequently so the roots of the grass grow down into the soil to find water;
- Never mow your grass lower than 3 inches (exceptions are Bermudagrass, bentgrass and seashore paspalum);
- Avoid synthetic fertilizers, which may draw water away from plants;
- Grow drought-tolerant grass varieties;
- Apply organic “wetting agents,” which allow the soil to fully absorb the water;
- De-thatch the lawn if decaying roots and stems are overly abundant;
- Aerate the lawn if the soil feels overly compacted;
- Allow clover to grow, which is drought tolerant and feeds soil naturally;
- Maintain the proper soil pH;
- Avoid mowing the lawn if no rain is predicted;
- Keep mower blades sharp.

This information has been taken from SafeLawns.org's web site, www.SafeLawns.org. For more information, you can view organic lawn care videos on their site.

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.

