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GROW A GREEN AND MORE ECO-FRIENDLY LAWN
by Garden expert, Author and TV & Radio Host Melinda Myers

May 9, 2011 –You can have your grass and be kind to the environment too. It's just a matter of changing your lawn care practices.

Proper mowing, watering, and fertilization can be the difference between a healthy lawn and a weed patch. Raise the mowing height of your lawn, if haven't already done so. Grow cool season grasses like bluegrass, fescue and ryegrass 2-1/2 to 3-1/2 inches tall. Warm season grasses like bermudagrass, carpetgrass, centipedegrass and zoysia should be grown at 1 to 2 inches tall, while St. Augustine should a bit higher, 2 to 3 inches, for best results. Taller grass is better able to compete with weeds.

Mow often, removing no more than one third the total height, in order to reduce stress on the grass. Leave the clippings on the lawn. A season's worth of clippings equals one fertilizer application. And make sure the blade is sharp for a better look and quicker recovery of the grass. Consider using a push or electric mower. It's good for the waistline and the environment.

Proper watering helps keep your lawn healthy and better able to fend off pests and out compete the weeds. But recent droughts, increased water rates, and efforts to conserve water may mean a change of habit. Allow your lawn to go dormant during drought. Minimize foot traffic and play on dormant lawns. Don't apply herbicides or fertilizer to dormant lawns. The fertilizer will feed the weeds and both can damage the dormant grass.

Those starting a new lawn may want to select a more drought tolerant grass suited to their climate. Rhizomatous (turf-type) tall fescue uses less water and needs less fertilizer than traditional lawn grasses. The native buffalo grass is a more drought tolerant slow growing warm season grass. It is slow to germinate and establishes and thrives in hot weather. And those with very limited annual rainfall should consider drought tolerant native groundcovers and plantings.

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Before fertilizing always start with a soil test so you apply the right type and amount of fertilizer for your lawn. Use a low nitrogen slow release fertilizer like [Milorganite](#). This organic nitrogen fertilizer is only available to the lawn when needed and won't damage your lawn when hot dry weather arrives.

Always sweep grass clippings and fertilizer residue off your walks and drives. This simple step keeps unwanted nutrients out of our waterways and eventually drinking water.

If you'd like to schedule an interview with Melinda Myers to discuss this or other gardening topics, please contact Diana Paul at 414-771-1888 or dianapaul@wi.rr.com

Gardening expert, TV host and author Melinda Myers has 30 years of horticulture experience and has written over 20 gardening books, including **Can't Miss Small Space Gardening**. She hosts the nationally syndicated **Melinda's Garden Moment** segments which air on TV and radio stations throughout the U.S. She is a columnist and contributing editor for **Birds & Blooms** magazine, hosted "**The Plant Doctor**" radio program for over 20 years as well as **Great Lakes Gardener** on PBS. Melinda has a master's degree in horticulture, is a certified arborist and was a horticulture instructor with tenure. Myers' web site is www.melindamyers.com

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