

# How to Love Your Lawn



Special Report by Marion Owen  
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"Techniques we use year after year to keep our lawn green and healthy. —Even in Alaska!"

—Marion Owen



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**D**on't you just love wriggling your toes in soft, green grass? Me, too. Until one day I went to a park and watched kids toss Frisbees. They'd often leap high in the air to snatch the frisbee and then touch down, sometimes rolling around on the grass.

I loved that they were having a good time, yet I cringed because I knew the city had recently fertilized the grass with chemicals.

I got to thinking, what about my grandkids?

In this report, we'll cover the #1 alternative to chemicals for keeping your grass healthy and green. It's a method we use in Kodiak, Alaska.

In a nutshell, we feed your lawn with the best lawn fertilizer money **can't** buy.

Let's dig in...

Here's a view of our lawn during the winter...



Here's a view of our lawn in late spring...



Every spring we jumpstart our lawn and maintain it through the year, without chemicals. If we can do it, you can, too.

Thing is:

*When it comes to lawn care, most Americans follow a “more is better” attitude. Over-fertilizing to the tune of 3 million tons per year.*

In the beginning...

We started our lawn from seed on a base of peat moss, shredded kelp, and compost. (Your lawn might differ, but that's OK). It took some experimenting to get where we are now because we had a few things going against us. I'm sure you know the feeling.

First, Kodiak's climate is classified as a "temperate rainforest" which means wet. Second, the soil is quite acidic (low pH) and lacks organic matter. Our lawn must withstand heavy rain, snow, cold winds that suck moisture out of leaves, and damaging freeze-thaw cycles.

Then there's the pressure of many footprints: B&B guests, kids, grandkids, and dogs.

Still, the method I'm about to share is simple. And I'm confident it will work for your patch of green, wherever you live.

### **Let's start with spring clean up**

When spring arrives, thoughts turn to outside activities. You feel the need to do something. Many people grab a rake and start cleaning up winter debris. Twigs, branches, pine cones, litter, plastic toys, dog poop.

So start by giving your lawn a gentle combing with a leaf rake. If the ground is moist, step lightly. Treading on a soggy lawn is one of the worst things you can do. Better to wait until the turf has dried out and the ground is not so mushy.



## **Don't tread on me**

Here's the deal. When you walk on a soggy lawn, you squeeze out the air between soil particles. Air pockets are critical to soil health, and make up a large percentage of healthy soil.



Without air “highways”, water and nutrients can't reach the root zone. Water forms puddles. Then one day, you look at your lawn and wonder, “Why does it look so pathetic?”

Remember, turf grass thrives on the same kind of soil in your garden: Rich, well-drained soil, high in organic matter.

Rest assured that perfect, well-drained soil doesn't come naturally in Kodiak, Alaska. Or anywhere else, for that matter.

In our case, we'd moved into a new house with a yard as bare as the moon. So we had to create our lawn. And learn the good, the bad and the ugly about lawn care...

## **What is the best lawn fertilizer?**

It's easy being green, whether you apply organic or chemical fertilizers. So let's look at the differences:

## Organic fertilizers

Organic fertilizers enrich the soil which improves aeration and root growth. Which means your lawn:

- Survives drought and extreme weather conditions
- Holds onto nutrients longer
- Requires less maintenance

Sounds good?

By the way, here's an important lawn care tip: HOW you mow your lawn makes a big difference. Keep your mower blades sharp and leave your grass 3 inches longer. This improves your lawn's health because the leaves of longer grass have more access to sunlight, which helps the grass grow thicker and create deeper roots.

## Chemical fertilizers:

- Wash away in heavy rains
- Turn your grass into an enticing, Day-Glo green. But at a price.
- The toxic runoff ends up in lakes, streams, and ultimately the ocean
- Create a toxic playground for kids and pets
- Have been linked to cancer and poisonings. Kids are higher-risk.

As for the soil itself, chemical fertilizers damage soil by killing beneficial microorganisms, worms, and fungi with toxic salt buildup.

*“With an organic lawn, you’re not simply putting down fertilizers four times a year; you’re initiating cultural practices to nurture life in the soil, and in turn, the soil sustains the grass.” — Paul Tukey, author of The Organic Lawn Care Manual*

## The #1 tip for every lawn

To create and maintain a lawn that's green, easy to maintain, organic, and safe for kids and pets, spread sifted compost on your lawn.

That's right. It's the best lawn fertilizer in the world.

All it takes is an inch or two.

Here's a photo of my husband spreading sifted compost over our lawn in late winter:



### **How often should you spread compost?**

Twice a year when the lawn is relatively dry. Then add water... Rain or sprinkler.

### **What else can you add besides compost?**

Think organic materials. It depends on what's available in your location. In coastal Alaska, the list includes:

- Spreading a combination of peat moss and compost, or
- One part peat moss to 3 bags steer or cow manure, or
- Finished compost plus sifted kelp, or
- A manure-compost blend plus last year's used potting soil

- You can also mix in:
- Soybean meal
- Cottonseed meal
- Dried molasses
- Well-aged manure—like a good wine!
- Finely shredded leaves (leaf mulch)
- Compost

Blend ingredients in a wheelbarrow. Then dump piles of it on the lawn or broadcast it by the shovelful, as if feeding chickens.



Then spread it around with the backside of a steel rake or with a leaf rake with a combing, fluffing action.

I admit, your lawn will look horrible for a while. Maybe a couple weeks. The neighbors will think you're crazy.

Then something magic happens. New, green shoots emerge and the brown stuff settles into the ground and disappears.



Now you know the secret. Compost is the best lawn fertilizer — I promise!

Your lawn will be ten times healthier. You don't have to worry about your kids running around barefoot. And the neighbors will stop whispering behind your back.

Now it's your turn!

I hope this report helpful.

Cheers and green blessings,

*Marion Owen*

P.S. Here is a list of resources for you:

- I've written an organic gardening and healthy home column for over 20 years. Here is the link to the ["Archive Vault: of my weekly gardening columns"](#).
- Want to learn more about composting? Compost!, the all-purpose answer to your gardening issues: [JoyofComposting.com](#). And JoyofComposting on [Facebook](#).

