

The Pushers are coming again!

THE FIGHT AGAINST ADDICTION

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Did you know that hundreds of addictions are going to happen right in your own community this summer; it could even happen in your very own backyard.

The pushers are coming out in full force saying you need their stuff. Its big money and they are convincing, often scaring you into believing you simply can't live without it. You will become dependent on them and continue to spend hundreds of dollars to feed the addiction.

It's not a pretty sight; here is what an addict may say:

"I first started it because my neighbors and friends were doing it so I wanted to try too. I felt great for a while; it was exactly what I needed. But, then I quickly became addicted. Now I am not in control. It controls me. Every time I try to stop I just get worse. Then when I see neighbors and friends doing it and looking so good I try it again. When my true friends, health officials and doctors say its bad I think that they are all just out to get me, they must have nothing else better to do with their time. The pusher says it is exactly what I need and everybody is doing it so it must be safe. My family is in denial; they want to believe that I am just fine. I

will need help and care to overcome my addiction, it may be difficult at first but I know that it will save time, money and health once I get my life back on track.”

This is occurring in your neighborhood. It could be your friend, your neighbor or even yourself being fooled into believing that you need to spend your money to feed the addiction that your lawn has to pesticides. Health care professionals, Doctors, scientists and concerned citizens groups have nothing to gain by telling us that these substances are unsafe and not only cause lawn addiction but more importantly cause serious health problems to humans, animals and the environment. On the other hand the industries pushing these chemicals have a lot to gain...Their bank accounts.

If you have been using pesticides your lawn needs rehab! You can get your lawn off of its chemical dependency and at the same time help the health of yourself and others. Grass has been growing since the beginning of time; healthy and green all on its own without the aid of chemical pesticide poisons. It is only since the development of chemicals for warfare that all the hype came about making people feel they need these toxic substances on their lawns...Hype from the companies that have made a business out of pocketing your money year after year after year.

You have chosen to raise a lawn...So why not try and raise a healthy lawn, not a junkie. There are steps to take to get your lawn off drugs and raise a nourished healthy lawn that will benefit you in the future by providing years of enjoyment with little maintenance. You'll be glad you did.

How it works (The Underground)

Your grass is composed of many little plants that grow from the soil. Grass is a living thing that needs nutrients just as we do. The soil is the food for your plant therefore when the grass is sick or diseased (bugs) you must look at the soil (food) and not the plant itself. Think about it...If you were to eat cardboard, which is void of all nutrients, you would get pretty sick as well.

When chemicals are sprayed on the grass, they treat symptoms and not the problem, they give the false pretense of health while the grass is on a false high and the grass then becomes addicted but still does not have its health. These chemicals have terrible side effects.

Put your garden on rehab...Save your lawn and your life.

Ten step program to get your garden off drugs and keep it of drugs

Healthy lawns need healthy soil

Healthy soil provides lots of minerals, trace elements and helpful fungi for your plants. A lawn requires six inches of topsoil to allow for root growth, and sufficient absorption of plant nutrients. Healthy soil means nutrients are there when they are needed, stored in the many organisms living under the ground. Your plants can absorb as much as they need, when they need them, but are not overwhelmed by nutrients.

Here are some steps to ensure you have healthy soil:

Identify the texture of your soil i.e. gravel, sand, silt, or clay, and understand what this means in terms of nutrients and drainage. Make sure your soil has an adequate supply of organic matter or compost. Mulching with compost is the best solution, but leaf mulch, straw, grass clippings are also good sources. Nitrogen may be needed to balance things out, since microorganisms draw nitrogen from the soil as they break down the carbon rich materials.

Compost is the magic potion of the garden. It has the uncanny ability to bind sandy soils and open clay soils. It will help prevent pest outbreaks. Compost contains the fungi and bacteria that plants need to effectively absorb nutrients. Spread compost on or in your garden in spring when surface growth is active, and in fall for root growth. Always throw a large handful of leaves or other carbon rich material over your kitchen scraps or other nitrogen rich material. Kelp and worms are an excellent addition to any compost pile and your garden.

Adjust the pH

If your soil is very acidic, apply powdered limestone to lower the pH. The application of agricultural limestone is very important in the maintenance program. Limestone helps reduce the acidity of the soil and unlocks the soil to make plant nutrients available to the grass plant. It also supplies magnesium and calcium, which are two essential nutrients for turfgrass growth.

Limestone is best applied in the fall or early spring. Limestone should be applied prior to natural fertilizers such as aged manure or kelp.

Choose the right Plants

Remember; know your plant's surroundings. Choose turf grass that is hardy and native to your area; blends of grasses are best. Kentucky bluegrass is the meal of choice for cinch bugs. If you decide that you want turf grass you must be aware of the care that is needed, much like buying a puppy, if you don't have the time and money to spend for proper care, maybe it is not for you. Golf courses have spent thousands of dollars in preparation and thousands more in maintenance - That is their business. Most folks on the other hand would rather enjoy their summers and not have to spend thousands of dollars and all of what little summer we have stressing out over a patch of grass.

There are however, many ground cover plants, shrubs, flowers and trees that grow well with very little maintenance. Along with walkways and ornamental garden features this will reduce or eliminate the amount of turf grass you have to care for.

Consider tough love and dig up a lot of that turf grass and start fresh with good soil and good plant varieties such as:

Dutch white clover

As a soil conditioner, gardeners often plant clover. It grows quickly and easily, chokes out weeds repels cinch bug and only flowers for approximately 3 weeks each year. The deep root system reduces soil compaction. Clover is also a nitrogen-fixing plant, which enriches the soil

with natural fertilizer. Clover will require seeding in the spring or late summer and a second seeding the following year. Clover also works well as a replacement for turf grass. Consider the benefits:

Low Maintenance - Clover needs little to no watering.

No mowing - unless you want to mow off the flowers.

No Fertilizers - fertilizers are not needed to grow clover.

Color - Clover stays vibrant green even in the driest part of summer.

Inexpensive – It is a fraction of the cost of other grass seed or sod.

Comfortable - Easy to walk through or play on.

And most importantly cinch bug does not like it.

Garden Plants

There are many ground covers, flowers, bushes, shrubs and trees to choose from that offer greater street appeal and little to no maintenance. Choose from a variety of local hardy native plants or simply look through catalogues to choose something interesting for your garden.

Plan your layout

Good planing is essential for an attractive and healthy garden. Look at walkways, decks, planters, trees, shrubs, flowers and boarders for color and scale as well as future maintenance.

You can hire the help of a landscape artist just as you would hire an architect or interior designer to help you with your home designing.

Take measurements - Measure the size of the area that you wish to landscape. Estimate where you would like to place trees, decks, benches, a pond etc. If you can, sketch this out on paper.

Go for color - Choose a color that you love. Paint your exterior doors this color and incorporate plants in the garden of the same color.

Think winter - Incorporate evergreen plants and shrubs to give that little bit of color in winter.

Shapes - lawn shape should be considered. Maintenance can be reduced and simplified by designing the lawn areas in continuous, easy-to-mow swaths.

By eliminating corners, mowing becomes quicker and easier. Corner areas can be replaced with shrub or flower plantings. "Islands" in the lawn, such as trees or flowerbeds will slow down the mowing. It is better to have one or two large islands than a number of smaller ones. Trees will do better with bark mulch or ground cover planted beneath, as grass will compete with the tree roots for nutrients. Trees with low-lying branches can have ground cover planted beneath, so the person mowing doesn't have to duck below.

Edges of the lawn can be defined with inset flagstone, landscaping brick or slate.

You get the idea. Just as you plan many other things in life, ensure you plan for a garden of lifelong enjoyment.

Allow your grass to grow

Turf grass requires at least 3 inches of growth to be healthy. This also discourages unwanted plants from seeding in your lawn. Grass clippings are the perfect fertilizer for your lawn; they are free, convenient and boost soil fertility by up to 30%. Set your lawn mower to 3 inches in height and to the "mulch" setting. Re-seeding may be necessary if your turfgrass is thin or spotty

in places, re-seed over top of it. First, roughly rake the area with a steel rake with short, hard tines. Then spread fresh grass seed following the recommended coverage rates on the seed package. Lightly cover the new seeds with mulch or other organic matter such as grass clippings and then keep the area moist until the seeds germinate.

Accept some weeds

Weeds are plants too. Weeds just happen to be the plants that like to grow in your garden. If you fill your garden with happy plants a few weeds may only require a few minutes to remove with a pulling tool available at many stores. If there is a plant or weed that has invaded an area of your lawn remember to remove it before it goes to seed. Dandelion fluff contains hundreds of dandelion seeds meaning a lot more weeds next year. If you have a larger weed problem you can control it naturally with corn gluten meal. This inexpensive product has been found to work very well at controlling dandelion and other weed seeds from germinating.

Aeration and thatch removal - let your lawn breathe

Aeration is the removal small plugs of grass and soil from the lawn, allowing air into the soil, breaking up mats of dead grass and debris that can accumulate at root level, and invigorating root growth. Aeration is also very important to ensure healthy plants. Aerating also helps water and nutrients penetrate the lawn. Garden forks are good tools for occasionally opening air pockets for healthy root growth. Thatch is a thick, spongy layer of organic matter and debris that builds

up between the grass blades and roots. By keeping water and nutrients from reaching the roots, thatch causes your lawn to grow poorly. Aerating will help to reduce thatch, and you can de-thatch small areas by raking vigorously with a steel rake. Avoid compacting turfgrass by using pathways and stepping-stones. Grass is a plant after all, and it does not like to be continually trampled upon.

Water to the roots - water less often and deeply

Water is something that all plants need to survive. Knowing when, where, and how much to water is crucial to maintain a healthy garden. Drainage is also a very important factor for most plants. Most plants hate having wet feet. Planting trees and shrubs will aid in drainage. Water in the early morning to allow foliage to dry up before the sun gets too hot and fries the water on them. Avoid watering in evening as standing water on leaves can lead to fungal problems.

Water deeply and less frequently.

Know Friend from Foe

Believe it or not insects are a healthy part of a garden. Yes, some of those creepy crawly wiggly things are great for your plants and pose no harm to you. Predators, parasites, and pollinators are the most important beneficial insects.

Earthworms –Earthworms are the biggest time and money savers for you and your garden!

Some gardeners purchase them and introduce them to their soil. Just one earthworm can circulate about a pound of soil in a year; bring the good soil up to the surface where it is needed.

Earthworms eat decaying matter and turn it into fertilizer, each day they produce nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, calcium and many micro nutrients in a form that all plants can use. For example, a 200 sq ft garden with a low worm population of only 5 worms/cubic foot will be provided with over 35 lbs (about 1/3 lb per worm) of top-grade fertilizer by the worms, each garden year. This means that your garden or lawn can be supplied with far more fertilizer and that of superior quality than a dry, granular or fast-acting chemical fertilizer. In fact, chemical fertilizers may even kill the earthworms that are present. As the fertilizers become soluble, they may leach down into the soil and force the earthworms to seek refuge elsewhere.

Ladybug - Everyone recognizes the familiar ladybug, or ladybird beetle. Many species have an enormous appetite for aphids, one of our most common plant pests. Others prefer scale insects and mites and are very effective in reducing infestations. Ladybug larvae are equally relentless predators. Their colorful, but ferocious appearance often causes unknowing gardeners to assume that they must be harmful. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Spiders – Spiders are very beneficial to the garden, they eat all kinds of pesky bugs and flies in their webs every summer.

Earwigs - Earwigs are, however ugly, more beneficial than they are destructive. While some species will feed on plants or ripe fruit, they mostly feed on other insects or decaying vegetation.

Their appearance is made threatening by the long pinchers on their posterior. These are actually used to defend against predators. The pinchers may look menacing, but they will not harm people.

Beetles – Beetles are predators of soil-dwelling pests, including slugs and snails. They also may be found feeding on aphids, mites, and adult and immature flies. Both the larval and adult stages are among the most common and valuable natural allies in the garden.

Pollinating insects - The benefit of insects that pollinate flowers is somewhat easier to estimate since without them there would be no apples, pears, cherries, citrus fruit, nuts, berries, coffee, melons, cucumbers, squash, or many other common foods. Pollinating insects are estimated to be worth a least 8 billion dollars annually. Dozens of species of flower flies, butterflies and bees inadvertently transfer pollen from one flower to another as they gather nectar to feed themselves and their young.

To control unwanted insects naturally, cedar chips around your bushes and shrubs will help repel insects just as your grandmother may have had a cedar chest to store linens to repel bugs. A natural insect spray formula for inside or outside the house would be Dr. Bronners Peppermint soap, or any other natural liquid soap mixed with 1 ounce of lemongrass oil. You can also add 1 to 5 drops of any of these pure essential oils (depending on your preference) to 1 quart of soapy water: Catnip oil, Citronella oil, Lavender oil, Cinnamon oil, Peppermint oil, Citrus oil, or Tea Tree oil.

Add 5 tablespoons of the soap per quart water. Add one ounce of the lemongrass to the water which you have added the soap and label it. Shake well and spray inside house where insects are seen. Test for strength. May be done as often as needed.

Use the same formula to spray the foundation, eaves and soffits, and the areas around doors, windows and crawls space, or attic vents, or any area where you see insects congregating. You can also use any citrus juices like lemon juice and soapy water. Spray around the outside of the house or where insects congregate.

It may also help to spray these areas with the above mixture before insects become a problem so that they will not be attracted to the area in the first place.

Many herbs such as chives and garlic can help as repellents when grown in the garden or on deck planters...They make beautiful plants too.

Some insects such as earwigs are attracted to dark places and organic matter. Try using an orange peel or a toilet paper tube baited with fruit. Place this in a corner of the garden overnight where earwigs are seen then carefully pick it up in the morning (it should contain the earwigs) and dunk it into the soapy water mix. Also be sure to remove any organic matter from around the perimeter of the foundation of your home and replace it with crushed stone or pavers to deter insects from entering your home.

Ants – although beneficial in the garden and rarely a pest; an excellent ant killer that can be easily made is to put one half sugar and one half baking soda in a container and shake well to

coat all the sugar in baking soda. On a dry day place little mounds of this mixture in area where ants are congregating. The ants are attracted to the sugar and eat the mixture and are then killed by the baking soda they consume.

Beneficial nematodes and diatomaceous earth are two other very effective products in controlling insects.

Create a diverse ecosystem

An ecosystem is defined as: The system formed by the interaction of all living things, of a particular environment, with one another and with their habitat. It is crucial that we support this interaction by choosing plants, which attract beneficial insects, remember not all insects are bad, some insects are the best friends a lawn can have. Use compost to create healthy soil. Be patient, observant and tolerant in your garden. Enjoy what nature has provided.

The rehab process is now complete...Sit back, relax and enjoy a beautiful non-toxic, healthy and low cost garden for years to come!

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Since 1999, Judie has been aggressively researching a wide range of subjects, particularly those pertaining to human health and environmental issues. Judie has written for local, regional and national publications.