



## IS YOUR LAWN GOOD OR BAD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT?



*Lawns are everywhere.*

by **Jaclyn Rhoads**

Is your lawn good or bad for the environment?

Autumn begins on September 22nd. The leaves begin to change color; the days are much shorter, and many people apply fertilizers to their lawn. Do you know the consequences of placing too much fertilizer on your lawn? How about pesticides and herbicides?

Well, lawns are everywhere, and they are growing and wreaking havoc on the natural environment. Here are some interesting facts:

- There are 30 million acres of green lawns in the U.S.
- Some 54 million people mow their lawns each week in the summer, using 800 million gallons of gas a year.
- More than 5 percent of urban air pollution comes from gas-powered lawn mowers.
- Seventy million pounds of pesticide get applied on home lawns, trees, and shrubs a year, polluting groundwater and sending phosphates and nitrates into lakes and streams, where they generate algae blooms that choke other plant life.

The quantities applied per acre to suburban lawns often exceed that which is applied to farm fields.

- Precious fresh water is being used by the millions of gallons -- in some areas two-thirds of available freshwater goes on lawns. Thirty percent of water used in developed areas goes to irrigate plants. Not only is this water being wasted on lawns, but a significant portion is lost due to evaporation and runoff due to excessive watering.

As more and more homes pop up throughout the Pinelands, every homeowner should focus on their landscape practices and use the ideas provided below. Landscaping practices affect water quality and quantity as well as plant and animal biodiversity, especially threatened and endangered species. For instance, the Pinelands Commission Science Staff has documented the effects of different land uses, such as agricultural, developed areas, etc. on water quality. Instances of elevated nitrates, changes from typical low pH waters, and presence of other compounds typically found in fertilizers have been documented and are of concern to the integrity of the Pinelands as a result of development. With your help, these waters can maintain their quality and quantity.

Green landscaping is one of those catchy phrases to describe creating and maintaining a healthy lawn for yourself, your children, your pets and the environment. The EPA has outlined simple ways to do this, and the benefits are numerous: save money, reduce non-point source pollution, reduce water usage, and reduce pesticide risk to children and pets.

The following points outline the EPA's definition of Green Landscaping with more defined suggestions for implementation:

1. Use a variety of plants, particularly native plants.
  - Use other native plants rather than grass for ground cover.
2. Reduce lawn size.
  - Plant shrubs, bushes, trees, etc.
3. Use slow-release organic fertilizer applied once, in the fall.
  - Read the label of fertilizers for the do's and don'ts.

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#### 4. Apply natural design.

- Randomly place or cluster plants varying by shapes and heights, which hides any plant loss and prevents the need for pesticides and other products to save this patch of area.

#### 5. Reduce use of power equipment.

- Cut your lawn at the highest recommended mower setting, mow often and leave the clippings in place.

#### 6. Conserve natural resources.

- Avoid planting or transplanting during the summer.
- Water deeply and less often, preferably in the early morning rather than mid-day, so less water evaporates.

#### 7. Control stormwater.

- Install rain barrels or divert rainwater to drain (a rock/gravel filled infiltration basin), a grassy swale, or a rain garden (a shallow depression planted with plants tolerating wet conditions). These should be at least 10 feet from buildings to avoid a wet basement.

#### 8. Compost yard waste.

- Compost provides free mulch, soil amendment, and a natural source of nutrients.

#### 9. Apply integrated pest management (alternatives to pesticides).

- Help prevent some weed seeds from germinating by removing excess thatch.

#### 10. Create wildlife habitat.

- Plant a variety of plants, bushes, and trees, which attracts birds and other wildlife and also helps to reduce your lawn size and maintenance time.

#### 11. Avoid and remove invasive plants.

- Don't use invasive species, and do not disturb natural areas.

#### 12. Protect natural areas.

- Leave natural areas on property undisturbed and enhance these areas by planting adjacent similar vegetation.

#### 13. Use plants to reduce heating and cooling needs.

- Plant deciduous trees (that lose their leaves in the winter) and/or pine trees and shrubs which will act as windbreaks in the winter.

Here are some important reasons for implementing green landscaping:

- With droughts and water restrictions using green landscaping will require less water, and you will be able to maintain your lawn and garden.
- There is only a limited quantity of soil, and it takes many years to develop.
- Over-fertilizing does not help your lawn and will runoff into water supplies causing nutrient pollution, killing fish,

and increasing water treatment.

- Many of the chemicals used in pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides such as atrazine, maneb, bensulide, pyrethrin, cyfluthrin, plus many more, have been shown to cause in animals birth defects, cancer and damage to the skin and nervous system.

Further information about how to implement green landscaping practices can be found on the EPA website [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov). Additional resources can be found at:

- [www.cleanwateraction.org/njef/pesticides.htm](http://www.cleanwateraction.org/njef/pesticides.htm) - New Jersey Environmental Federation
- [www.gristmagazine.com](http://www.gristmagazine.com) - "Green Pastures" article provides eco-friendly ways to fight against common fungi, weeds and insects without chemicals.
- [www.beyondpesticides.org](http://www.beyondpesticides.org) - least toxic control of pests in the home and garden and pesticide factsheets.

If all households start to implement this type of practice, we could reduce water use, water pollution, health risk, and harm to people, wildlife, and the natural environment.



## PINELANDS COMMISSION 2004 MEETING SCHEDULE

Thursday, October 14, 2004 (7:00 p.m.)

Friday, November 12, 2004 (9:30 a.m.)

Friday, December 10, 2004 (9:30 a.m.)

**Pinelands Commission Meetings are open to the public. For meeting location call the Commission at 609-894-7300.**

## LEGISLATION UPDATE

**S1368 Fast Track Law** - To keep up-to-date with the environmental community's work to reverse the Fast Track Law and its damage to the environment, visit The Save New Jersey Coalition's website [www.savenj.net](http://www.savenj.net). Pinelands Preservation Alliance is one of fifty plus member organizations involved.

*The following represent bills that are before the New Jersey Assembly or Senate that would potentially affect the Pinelands. PPA supports these initiatives in their current version before the State Legislature.*

**A2064 Establishes New Jersey Water Supply and Contamination Study Commission, Sponsored by: Assemblyman Louis Greenwald (District 6)** This bill would establish a commission to study and prioritize New Jersey's potable water supply and water contamination problems which would include the following priorities: funding and staffing for programs addressing elevated levels of methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE) and radium in the State's groundwater; the need for feasibility studies to determine solutions for contaminated potable water supplies; statewide issues of non-point source pollution; contamination due to storm water or agricultural runoff; water supply policies and recommendations for long-term solutions; identify contaminated surface and groundwater resources, and potential claims for natural resource damages.

**S407 Establishes the New Jersey Water Supply in the 21st Century Study Task Force, Sponsored by: Senator Anthony Bucco (District 25)** **S407** would establish a "New Jersey Water Supply in the 21st Century Study Task Force" which would be responsible for studying and prioritizing water supply problems in the State. The endeavors would include: need for increased funding for projects to comply with the State and federal "Safe Drinking Water Act"; analyze State's ability to manage, preserve and protect future potable water supplies and develop new supplies; examine policies to reverse increasing water consumption and determine need for reducing new water and sewer permits; replenish depleted underground aquifers; analyze the protection of environmentally sensitive areas such as the Pinelands; evaluate policies and provide recommendations on contamination of groundwater and surface waters; identify future challenges that the State will be facing, and propose solutions which may include legislative changes.

**A2880 Water Supply Preservation and Protection Act, Sponsored by: Assemblyman John Rooney (District 39)** This "Act" would establish a Water Supply Preservation and Protection Fund to be administered by the Department of Environmental Protection. The funds would be accumulated from a water consumption tax on the owner or operator of every public community water system and a water diversion tax. The moneys would be used for public acquisition and development easement acquisitions of lands with the Highlands and the Pinelands for water resources and watershed protection

**S929 Prohibits State from exporting water from the Pinelands, Sponsored by: Senator Martha Bark (District 8)** This bill prohibits the exporting of water from the Pinelands under any circumstances. In addition to the enacted law in 1980 - 1981 that prohibited Pinelands water from being transported for public water supply purposes to any

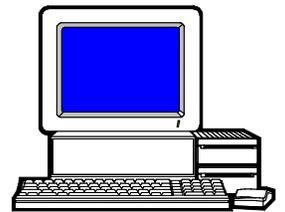
location more than 10 miles outside the boundaries of the Pinelands National Reserve, this bill expands this prohibition to include times of declared water supply emergencies.

**S274 The "Smart Growth Tax Credit Act", Sponsored by: Senator John Adler (District 6) and Senator Barbara Buono (District 18)** The "Smart Growth Tax Credit Act" provides tax incentives against the corporation business tax and gross income tax for developers and owners who design and build residential and mixed use development meeting specific "smart growth" and "green building" criteria. Additional incentives also exist for exceeding the criteria.

**To get an update on the status of these bills or to write your legislator visit the State Legislature website at <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>.**

## RESOURCES

### RESOURCES RESOURCES



**NEW JERSEY AUDUBON SOCIETY**

[www.njaudubon.org](http://www.njaudubon.org)

**NEW JERSEY CONSERVATION FOUNDATION**

[www.njconservation.org](http://www.njconservation.org)

**SIERRA CLUB, NEW JERSEY CHAPTER**

[www.sierraactivist.org](http://www.sierraactivist.org)

**THE NATURE CONSERVANCY**

[www.nature.org/newjersey](http://www.nature.org/newjersey)

**THE FORKED RIVER MOUNTAIN COALITION**

[www.frmc.org](http://www.frmc.org)

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**

[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

**GARDEN STATE ENVIRONET**

[www.gsenet.org](http://www.gsenet.org)

**ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY**

**ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONS**

[www.anjec.org](http://www.anjec.org)

**NEW JERSEY ENVIRONMENTAL FEDERATION**

[www.cleanwateraction.org/njef](http://www.cleanwateraction.org/njef)

**SAVE BARNEGAT BAY**

[www.savebarnegatbay.org](http://www.savebarnegatbay.org)

**ALLIANCE FOR LIVING OCEAN**

[www.livingocean.org](http://www.livingocean.org)

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

[www.state.nj.us](http://www.state.nj.us)

[www.state.nj.us/pinelands/](http://www.state.nj.us/pinelands/)

[www.state.nj.us/dep/](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/)

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- Basic  \$35
- Friend  \$60
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- Patron  \$250
- Benefactor  \$500
- Chairman's Circle  \$1,000
- Other  \_\_\_\_\_

*All members receive:*  
A PPA membership card  
A year's subscription to *Inside the Pinelands*  
A PPA window sticker  
Discounts on PPA merchandise and events

A Sponsor will receive an *Exploring the Pine Barrens of New Jersey* map  
A Patron will receive a copy of *Exploring the Pine Barrens of New Jersey* book  
A Benefactor will receive a Pinelands Botanical Print by Robin Jess  
A member of the Chairman's Circle will receive a personalized tour of the Pinelands



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