Chemical-Free Lawncare
The application of hazardous pesticides is not necessary to maintain New England lawns!

For many homeowners, the pursuit of an immaculate grass lawn comes at the cost of toxic chemical exposures. Nationwide, our cultural desire for green lawn is prioritized above human and environmental health.

Inside:
Casco Bay Cleans Up
10 Tips for Organic Lawns
Organize for Healthy Families & Communities

Conventionally maintained lawns require large resource and chemical inputs.

The pesticides applied on your home turf leech into soil and groundwater, run off into waterways and pollute the air.¹
Lawn chemical can enter your home on shoes, clothes, and pets. Because pesticides break down fastest when exposed to sunlight and water, they linger longer when carried indoors, which can mean daily, repeated exposure.²

Pesticides are also hazardous to pets. We know the cancer risk for dogs rises when lawns are treated with pesticides.³
All animals in the environment are affected: of 30 commonly used lawn pesticides, 16 are toxic to birds, 24 are toxic to fish and other aquatic life and 11 are deadly to bees.⁴
Casco Bay residents were concerned: Home pesticide consumption in Maine increased sevenfold between 1995 and 2015. Harmful pesticide levels were found in more than a dozen places along the bay in stormwater runoff samples, and local lawncare habits were to blame. This chemical dependence was causing the green algae blooms that were taking over the bay. Residents responded to this discovery with efforts to change the cultural tide of compulsory green lawns to healthy, diversified “Bayscapes.” Advertising and education promoted Bayscaping with practical organic lawncare guidance, and socials brought neighbors together to join the community effort to “keep Casco Bay blue.”

One town on Casco Bay took their activism a step further. Community group Protect South Portland got public support behind them in 2016 and gave a presentation to City Council on the dangers of pesticides to human health and the environment. The council voted unanimously to draft an ordinance to ban pesticide use on lawns.
The solution starts with your backyard:
10 Tips to Cultivate a Nontoxic Turf

1. Pay mind to timing: while conventional lawns rely on chemicals, organic lawns rely on windows of opportunity. Many expert resources offer calendars to guide you throughout the growing season!
2. Plant the right type of grass: different seeds prefer shade and sun. Consider drainage, foot traffic, and soil type. Choose seeds for your climate.
3. Cut your grass high to promote root growth, crowd out weeds, and thicken turf.
4. Make a rain gauge to measure precipitation! Water deeply, in the early morning, and only after the grass has begun to wilt.
5. Build good healthy soil with lots of organic matter to hold water, nutrients, air, and microorganisms.
6. Make and use compost! Rake on a fine layer twice a year.
7. Test your soil! Most lawn grasses like a pH of 6.5 – 7. Dandelions like a pH of 7.5. Raise the pH with lime, lower the pH with sulfur.
8. Dig up invasive plants, or drown them in corn gluten.
9. Read up on DIY Herbicides: vinegar, salt, and soap.
10. Embrace your biodiverse, colorful turf! Accept the insects and weeds that habituate. Alternately, remodel your yard into a recreation space. Consider a vegetable or a rock garden!
Nontoxic Neighborhoods Need Community Support

Sustainable land management practices that emphasize alternative methods of pest prevention will minimize exposure and protect health for future generations.

➢ Talk to your neighbors about the dangers of pesticides and get a group to pledge to refrain from cosmetic chemical use.
➢ Forming a group to fight pesticide pollution is one of the most effective ways to make a difference. Toxics Action Center can help you pull together a group, plan a winning campaign, win a community vote, and more.
➢ Call up your town clerk to find out if or how you can pass a local ordinance or resolution to prohibit or reduce these dangerous pesticides in your town.

At Toxics Action Center, We believe everyone has the right to clean air, clean water and healthy communities. We work side-by-side with communities to prevent or clean up pollution in New England.