



# ACTIVIST'S TOOLKIT

A Guide to Promoting Sustainable Lawn  
& Landscape Care in Your Community



Madison, WI • 773.878.8245 • [www.MidwestGrowsGreen.org](http://www.MidwestGrowsGreen.org)

This document was adapted from the original authored by Midwest Pesticide Action Center

Special thanks to Patagonia – Lincoln Park for their generous support of this project. To all past, current, and future activists, we appreciate your hard work and thank you for your efforts to protect our communities. Keep up the great work!

This document was adapted from the original authored by Midwest Pesticide Action Center.

# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Natural Lawn Care and Your Community.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Understanding the Issues: Natural Lawn Care, Health, and the Environment .....</b>	<b>3</b>
	Health Effects of Conventional Lawn Care .....	6
	Environmental Impacts of Conventional Lawn and Landscape Care.....	6
	Benefits of Sustainable Lawn and Landscape Care.....	7
	Educating Yourself and Others about Natural Lawn Care .....	7
<b>3</b>	<b>Tools for Building a Successful Issue Campaign.....</b>	<b>9</b>
	Defining Success.....	11
	Sample Natural Lawn Care Policy and Contract Documents .....	11
	Getting People on Board .....	14
	Running a Good Meeting .....	17
	Raising an Issue at a Public Meeting .....	18
	Follow up with Decision Makers After the Event .....	18
	Getting Media Attention.....	20
	Writing a Letter to your Decision Maker .....	23
	Managing a Letter-Writing Campaign.....	25
	Having a Productive Phone Call with a Decision Maker.....	25
	Approaching and Meeting Community Decision Makers.....	26
	Engaging Online .....	27
<b>4</b>	<b>Complete List of Resources.....</b>	<b>30</b>





# 1

## NATURAL LAWN CARE AND YOUR COMMUNITY

Nationwide, turf grass is estimated to cover over 40 million acres, an area three times larger than the amount dedicated to corn. Lawn and landscape care practices take up many resources as they rely on large amounts of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and water for maintenance. These practices negatively affect the quality of life in our communities by degrading local waterways, polluting the air, harming pets and wildlife, contributing to climate change, and threatening human health. For these reasons, many people, municipalities, and countries are transforming their lawns, parks, and public spaces by eliminating pesticides and using other sustainable lawn and landscape care practices. Since 1994, Safer Pest Control Project (SPCP), a nonprofit organization, has helped homeowners, activists, professional landscapers, and local and state governments to reduce the health risks and environmental impacts of pesticides. We've now created this toolkit, an easy-to-use resource, to help inspire you, the local activist, to initiate change in your own community. This guide will cover many of the basic tools for building a campaign that can influence decision makers, generate media coverage, and reach out to community members through social media.





# 2

## **UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES: NATURAL LAWN CARE, HEALTH, AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Natural lawn care (NLC) practices rely on naturally occurring processes and organic amendments to create a sustainable lawn and garden. By cultivating healthy soil without synthetic chemicals, you can grow and maintain a healthy landscape with less impact on the environment and the health of your family. A natural lawn can also be beautiful, even by conventional standards. In fact, well-established natural lawns are healthier and stronger than conventionally maintained ones, especially in times of stress like drought. Furthermore, as sustainable landscapes require less water, fertilizer, and pesticides, they are more cost effective.

# BASICS OF NATURAL LAWN CARE

## TAKE A SOIL TEST

Healthy lawns require healthy soil. Grass thrives with properly balanced nutrients. Perform a soil test every three to five years to help determine exactly what you need to maintain your soil's health. Testing is inexpensive and reduces unnecessary fertilizer applications.

## FERTILIZE ORGANICALLY

Switch to an organic fertilizer made from plant or animal materials. Most commercial fertilizers have too much "fast release" nitrogen. Fast release nitrogen is like junk food for plants, creating a cycle of dependency between your yard and synthetic chemicals. Grass can't use all those nutrients at once, so a portion of them washes away, polluting nearby water resources. Organic fertilizers, on the other hand, allow the grass to absorb nutrients as needed as the excess nutrients bind to soil. Grass cycling, or leaving grass clippings on the lawn, is another great natural alternative to synthetic fertilizers.

## RESEED AND TOP DRESS ANNUALLY

Reseed at least once a year, in the spring or fall, with a mix of grass seed and compost. Select a variety of grass that is well suited to your region. Use hardy grasses such as fescues and ryes when possible. To establish the seed, water slightly each day for at least two weeks. Top dressing with compost will naturally replenish your lawn, providing nutrients and microbes that keep your soil healthy.

## GET RID OF WEEDS NATURALLY

Stop using synthetic pesticides on your lawn and garden. Consider using corn gluten (an organic, corn by-product that is a natural preventative weed control) to reduce weeds. Apply it early in the spring, usually before the forsythia bloom. Over the

course of a few growing seasons, you will see how it reduces weeds naturally. Invest in a sturdy weeding tool and go after weeds as they appear, rather than all at once. Remember that a thick, healthy, dense turf is your best defense against weeds.

## WATER CORRECTLY

Watering correctly is not about watering your lawn a fixed number of times each week. Instead, you want to water deeply and infrequently early in the morning to minimize evaporation and safeguard against fungus. Ideally, you want one inch of water delivered once a week. Use a tuna can to measure when you have reached one inch. Daily, brief watering discourages deep root growth, one of the essentials of healthy turf grass.

## MOW PROPERLY

Mow your lawn to at least three inches high. Correct mowing will increase the strength of the root system and naturally shade out weeds. Don't mow your lawn every week out of habit if it doesn't need it. Mow with sharp blades that make a clean cut. Dull blades will rip the grass and weaken your lawn's defenses.

## DIVERSIFY YOUR YARD

The reason turf grass takes so much work to maintain is that it is not native to our region. We recommend that you diversify your yard to include native grasses, trees, bushes, and perennials. These plants will enhance the beauty of your home, attract birds and beneficial insects, and give you more time to get out and enjoy the summer!

# HEALTH EFFECTS OF CONVENTIONAL LAWN CARE

Most conventional lawn care programs depend on pesticides. In fact, some call for up to five applications of pesticides each year. Pesticides are a class of chemicals that include herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides that pose serious risks to both human health and the environment.

According to the National Home and Garden Pesticide Use study conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 82% of households use pesticides. In fact, on average, households use three to four types of pesticides. This high level of pesticide use is reflected by the amounts that are in our bodies. Twenty-nine out of 44 pesticides were found in most people who were sampled according to the National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals. Those pesticides found at the highest rates included ones that are commonly used on lawns. Considering the dangers that pesticides pose to us, our pets, and, most importantly, our children who are most vulnerable to health risks associated with pesticide use, these findings should greatly concern us. Research has linked pesticides to cancer, asthma, and birth defects as well as neurological, behavioral, reproductive, hormonal, and immune system disorders.

# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF CONVENTIONAL LAWN & LANDSCAPE CARE

Efforts to create beautiful outdoor spaces for our families and friends to enjoy have unintentionally resulted in the degradation of the environment we seek to improve. Fertilizers applied to green lawns and gardens and pesticides applied to protect them have washed off into waterways. Unfortunately, our lawns have become significant sources of water pollution that contribute to the decline of healthy water resources.

Seventy-four percent of households apply some kind of fertilizer. Plus, homeowners use four times the amount of fertilizer per square foot as compared to farmers. The widespread use, and overuse, of fertilizers is worrisome as the phosphorus and nitrogen found in them degrade water quality by promoting the excessive growth of aquatic vegetation. This vegetation consumes oxygen in the water, which causes stress to fish and other aquatic organisms, and contaminates drinking water supplies. In fact, phosphorus pollution is one of the ten most widespread problems identified by the Illinois EPA facing our waterways.

Pesticides applied to outdoor areas, such as fields, gardens, parks, and lawns end up as runoff into our waterways. In fact, pesticides are widely found in rivers, streams, lakes, and in our drinking water. The U.S. Geological Survey's report, "Pesticides in the Nation's Streams and Ground Water, 1992-2001," found pesticides in 96 percent of all fish, 100 percent of all surface waters, and 33 percent of major aquifers in the major water systems studied. We know that lawns and gardens contribute to this widespread pollution as urban watersheds have found higher rates of pesticides than any other type of watershed (including agricultural). Keeping pesticides out of our waterways is important as they harm birds, fish, bees, and other aquatic organisms.

# BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABLE LAWN & LANDSCAPE CARE

Environmentally friendly lawn and landscape practices include the use of organic fertilizers, compost, grass cycling, native plants, rain barrels, rain gardens, and pesticide alternatives. Some of the benefits of sustainable lawn and landscape care include:



- The use of our yards and public spaces as healthy, safe community spaces.
- Native species as helpful additions to your yard because they attract places for birds, insects, and mammals to feed, rest, and raise their young. Furthermore, networks of native gardens in the city can act as habitat corridors for wildlife migration.
- Native plants that need little or no watering to survive as they've adapted to the local environment. Plus, by using smart watering techniques you will reduce the amount of stormwater runoff of pesticides, phosphorus, and nitrogen into local waterways.
- Saving money by using natural lawn care. You'll also help to reduce pollution. According to a study by the Seattle Public Utilities, the economic value of the environmental, public health, water conservation, and reduction in hazardous waste materials associated with sustainable lawn practices equals \$75 per household per year.

## EDUCATING YOURSELF AND OTHERS ABOUT NATURAL LAWN CARE

As you work to create healthier changes in your community, you should understand some of the basic issues surrounding lawn care. Many people around the country are transitioning to safer lawn practices, so you don't need to start from scratch. Learn from others and get their advice. Here are a few helpful resources:

- Safer Pest Control Project: [www.spcpweb.org/yards](http://www.spcpweb.org/yards)
- Beyond Pesticides: <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/lawn/>
- GRASSROOTS Environmental Education: <http://www.grassrootsinfo.org/ghlpindex.html>
- Environment and Human Health Inc.: <http://www.ehh.org/>
- Safelawns.org: <http://www.safelawns.org/>
- Children's Environmental Health Network: [cehn.org](http://cehn.org)
- Pesticide Action Network North America: <http://www.panna.org/>

# NATURAL LAWN CARE FAQS: DEBUNKING MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

## WHY IS NATURAL LAWN CARE BETTER THAN CONVENTIONAL METHODS?

Natural lawn care (NLC) practices are safer for humans, pets, and the environment. Conventional lawn chemicals pollute our water, harm our environment, and have adverse effects on people and pets. Applying pesticides to get rid of weeds and pests actually damages your lawn. It creates a cycle of dependency on chemicals that reduces your lawn's natural strengths. Synthetic pesticides and fertilizers destroy naturally beneficial organisms that help produce the nutrients plants need to grow. This weakens the grass and, more importantly, creates a system that encourages the growth of weeds and diseases. Natural lawn care improves the quality of the soil so that it retains water and nutrients more effectively. It also significantly reduces pests by restoring balance to your lawn's ecosystem. Natural lawn care also helps your lawn withstand drought, pests, and other common problems better than synthetic lawn care methods.

## IS NATURAL LAWN CARE MORE EXPENSIVE THAN CONVENTIONAL LAWN CARE METHODS?

Once established (over the course of at least two growing seasons), a natural lawn uses less water and fertilizers and requires less mowing and maintenance. With reduced inputs—natural, organic fertilizers, seeds, and compost—you will find that your lawn maintenance costs are lower. A natural lawn is also a stronger and healthier lawn, which will improve resistance to pests and disease.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SOIL WHEN YOU USE NATURAL LAWN CARE?

Naturally maintained lawns tend to have healthier soil that contains higher organic content and is full of biological life. Fertile soil is critical to growing healthy plants. Don't forget: your lawn is basically one big plant! Natural lawn care practices encourage turf that has deep roots. Deep roots result in dense turf, and a lawn that is naturally able to block out weeds and pests. In fact, disease and pest problems are rare in a healthy, fertile, and well-maintained lawn that is free of synthetic pesticides.

## WILL I SEE MORE DANDELIONS AND OTHER WEEDS?

The presence or possibility of weeds probably causes the most confusion and worry to someone who wants

to start using NLC practices. No one can guarantee or realistically expect to have no weeds in a natural lawn. Every lawn will have some weeds; however, a reduction in weeds through practices that will naturally eliminate them through the promotion of dense turf and healthy soil is the essence of NLC. Mowing, watering, and fertilizing your lawn in the proper way will also help to reduce weed pressures. There is a movement within several municipalities to debunk the bad reputation of dandelions and other weeds in public parks. The Chicago Park District and the [City of Boulder](#), Colorado, have both had recent campaigns that have rebranded dandelions as a sign of a healthy, safe park. In fact, dandelions are an indicator that the park does not use pesticides that are harmful to children, pets, and the environment. Fifty years ago, dandelions were not considered weeds to be eradicated! They were considered a normal part of every lawn.

Weeds are indicators of lawn problems. As most weeds grow in low moisture, compacted, acidic, and nutrient-deficient soils, they will likely only appear in response to an opening created by improper care. Safer Pest Control Project's fact sheet, [Read Your Weeds](#), outlines what each weed is saying about the state of your soil and condition of your lawn. It's important to understand why people think all weeds are bad. Take time to understand the national obsession with a weed-free lawn and the stigma and consequences this has created. Help people understand that they need to re-imagine their lawns as more diverse, healthy ecosystems.

## DOES A NATURAL LAWN MEAN A "DO-NOTHING" LAWN?

Natural lawn care is not "no care." Natural lawn care still uses inputs combined with proper maintenance. Nobody wants your natural lawn to look bad. In fact, you want it to look better than your neighbor's lawn. There will be a transition period when moving from a conventional pesticide system to an NLC system. Set reasonable expectations, especially in the first two years. Be sure to thoroughly assess the way the lawn is used, how much sun the yard receives, and any other considerations that will affect the way the lawn will grow. This will set you up for success, both in attaining a healthy lawn and in engaging others in healthy lawn care practices.





## TOOLS FOR BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL ISSUE CAMPAIGN

Now that you understand the basic principles of NLC practices, it's important to learn how to create momentum for change in your community. While each community will have different resources and needs, this toolkit provides tips and strategies to help you achieve success.

Individuals, companies, schools, and municipalities all make lawn care decisions. However, for many activists, creating change starts in their own backyard or with their friends, family, and neighbors. Others may start by targeting their local municipal government, schools, or the public. All are important decision makers when it comes to transitioning conventionally maintained lawns to naturally maintained ones.

# DEFINING SUCCESS

The first step in your efforts to inspire changes in the management of lawns and landscapes will be to write a clear, short, visionary statement defining what success will look like. This statement will be critical not only in keeping you focused but also in establishing a clear endpoint. It will also be helpful in communicating your efforts to stakeholders and potential partners who share similar interests. In defining success for your objective, make sure to frame what constitutes success in a positive manner by focusing on the resources that you are working to protect rather than the losses of an opposition party or interest.

## HOW TO USE

For example, your group will be successful when:

- The city passes an ordinance banning the use of conventional pesticides on all publicly managed spaces in order to create safe, healthy places for families while also protecting the environment.
- The school agrees to use organic, natural fertilizers and no pesticides to manage school grounds to protect children from the harmful health impacts of lawn and landscape chemicals.
- The neighborhood agrees to use an NLC program to protect the health of families in your community.

# SAMPLE NATURAL LAWN CARE POLICY & CONTRACT DOCUMENTS

As you are defining the purpose of your campaign, be aware that many communities have already gone down the same path. These success stories can offer inspiration and encouragement. Using policy documents from other communities, such as resolutions or landscape contracts, can give you examples to bring to decision makers to highlight the changes you would like to see in your community. Using pre-existing regulations or contracts will save not only you and the community time but will also give you a powerful tool to advocate for change. If you are a resident of Illinois, check out SPCP's factsheet, [Laws to Protect you from Outdoor Pesticides](#), to learn the laws that are already in place. Explore the following documents, as well as SPCP's [Municipal Pesticide Reduction Toolkit](#), for ideas for your own campaign:

## SAMPLE NATURAL LAWN CARE POLICY DOCUMENTS

### THE CITY OF EVANSTON'S SUSTAINABLE PEST CONTROL AND PESTICIDE REDUCTION POLICY RESOLUTION.

The city of Evanston serves as a model to the public on the use of sustainable pest control and NLC practices and illustrates how to increase awareness about such practices. In 2010, the city created the Sustainable Pest Control and Pesticide Reduction Policy. The purpose of this Resolution is to reduce the use of pesticides through the implementation of sustainable pest control practices on city-owned or leased property, and to educate the public and private sectors. To find a copy of this policy, [click here](#).

---

## **THE STATE OF ILLINOIS'S ORDER TO REDUCE THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF ILLINOIS STATE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS.**

This Executive Order directs state agencies to lead by example in waste prevention, energy efficiency and conservation, procurement, and water quality, and conservation. This Order includes the reduction of toxic chemicals that adversely affect public health and the environment. By implementing these sustainability practices, agencies will not only improve the quality of our air, land, and water but they will also save taxpayers' money by reducing utility bills, waste disposal fees, and other operating costs. To find a copy of this policy, [click here](#).

## **THE TOWN OF MARBLEHEAD (MA) BOARD OF HEALTH: ORGANIC PEST MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS.**

The Town of Marblehead, MA has been at the forefront of organic lawn and landscape care. This policy implements the ban of toxic pesticides on publicly managed lawns. To find a copy of this policy, [click here](#).

## **WASHINGTON STATE'S TRI-COUNTY INTEGRATED PEST AND VEGETATION MANAGEMENT: MODEL POLICY.**

This policy calls for the development of pest- management policies that minimize the use of pesticides in favor of practices that are environmentally friendly and less harmful to public health. This policy provides information about an integrated pest management (IPM) approach in general and specific practices to use near waterways and buffer zones, developed landscapes, lawns and turf, and natural open spaces. To find a copy of this policy, [click here](#).

## **RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF PLAINVILLE, CONNECTICUT.**

This resolution shows the Plainville residents' support of the voluntary, non-use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers on lawns and gardens. To find a copy of this resolution, [click here](#).

## **CONNECTICUT'S PUBLIC ACT NO. 07-168.**

This act established a ban of pesticides on the grounds of public and private K-8 schools. Although there is a two-year exemption for athletic fields, all other fields must be maintained by using IPM methods in the interim. At the end of the two-year period, the management of the athletic fields will be organic as well. To find a copy of this Act, [click here](#).

## **WASHINGTON, D.C.'S PESTICIDE EDUCATION AND CONTROL AMENDMENT ACT OF 2012.**

This law restricts the use of non-essential cosmetic pesticides, such as weed 'n feed, on all government-owned property. In addition, the bill calls for education of D.C. businesses and private homeowners who will still be allowed to use synthetic pesticides on their properties. To find a copy of this bill, [click here](#).

## **THE VILLAGE OF FRANKLIN PARK SUSTAINABLE PEST CONTROL POLICY.**

The village of Franklin Park approved a resolution putting in place a sustainable pest control and pesticide-reduction policy for village-owned property. The Village used the Evanston IPM ordinance as inspiration, expanding its influence in Illinois. For more information on the Franklin Park ordinance, read the full resolution [text](#).

---

## **STATE OF ILLINOIS LAWN CARE PRODUCTS APPLICATION AND NOTICE ACT (PUBLIC ACT 91-0099).**

This act requires an “applicator for hire” to post signs when applying pesticides to turf or ornamentals. The Parents’ Right-to-Know Law amended this Illinois Department of Agriculture-administered act. All schools receiving public funds and licensed childcares must provide notification prior to the application of pesticide products. The law also recommends that schools and childcares use a pesticides-free turf program. The State of Illinois Lawn Care Products Application and Notice Act was amended effective July 2010 to state that no applicator for hire should apply phosphorus-containing fertilizer to a lawn, except as demonstrated to be necessary by a soil test. To find a copy of this resolution, [click here](#).

For a more extensive list of policies and laws, see the Beyond Pesticides list [here](#). The Beyond Pesticides list is also a good reference point to gain a better understanding of what your community or state has already done to address the use of toxic chemicals on lawns and landscapes.

## **SAMPLE NATURAL LAWN CARE CONTRACT DOCUMENTS**

The process of transitioning the lawn and landscape maintenance procedures of an institution within your community to an NLC system will likely require a change in lawn care contracts. The following resources provide sample language to help your community begin using more environmentally friendly practices.



- Safer Pest Control Project. *Model Contract Specifications for Transitioning Municipal Properties to Natural Lawn Care*. Available [here](#) (pg. 64).
- Alameda County Waste Management Authority & Alameda County Source Reduction and Recycling Board. 2007. *Model Bay-Friendly Landscape Maintenance Specifications*. Available [here](#).
- City and County of San Francisco. *Request for Proposal: Integrated Pest Management Service for City Owned Buildings and Properties*. Available [here](#).
- City of Seattle, City Purchasing Office. *Request for Proposal: Integrated Pest Management Services*. Available [here](#).

# GETTING PEOPLE ON BOARD

## LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Leading by example is an excellent way to begin your campaign to promote sustainable lawn and landscape practices in your community. By growing your own lawn without synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and utilizing native plants, rain barrels, compost, and other environmentally friendly practices in your garden, you can demonstrate that anyone can have a sustainable yard.

If you want to transition your lawn off conventional lawn chemicals, there are some great resources available. Specifically, SPCP has information on [natural lawn care for homeowners](#), [utilizing eco-friendly landscaping](#), [growing bee-friendly gardens](#), [identifying and eliminating weeds](#) (SPCP's Read Your Weeds Factsheet), [purchasing compost tea](#), [purchasing natural lawn care products](#), and a following a [natural lawn care calendar](#). You may also want to read SPCP's [tale of two families](#), a factsheet highlighting the differences between organic and conventional lawns. For a more detailed resource, try Paul Tukey's book, [\*The Organic Lawn Care Manual: A Natural, Low-Maintenance System for a Beautiful, Safe Lawn.\*](#)

Choose a lawn care company that provides NLC services. Be sure to choose carefully by doing your research. For Illinois residents, SPCP has a [Midwest Natural Lawn Care Companies](#) list. Beyond Pesticides also offers a directory, the [Safety Source for Pest Management](#), which may have providers listed in your area. Know about greenwashing—making products sound more environmentally friendly than they really are—and don't fall for it! Make sure you know what services the company provides, what products they use, and whether they are willing to work with you. For more information on the products used on your lawn, the metro regional government has a great guide, [Grow Smart Grow Safe](#), which examines the environmental and health hazards of commonly used lawn and landscape products.

## INVITING PEOPLE TO YOUR CAMPAIGN

Depending on the scope of your objective, you may need help with the work associated with running an issue campaign. Sometimes talking about an important issue with close friends, family, or neighbors can be harder than talking to a stranger. However, someone who cares about and knows you is more likely to listen and share your concern. Explain your passion and interest in NLC. Share information and provide compelling reasons why they too should get involved. Safer Pest Control Project's fact sheet, [Talking to Your Neighbors about Pesticides](#), covers the basics of broaching this topic and provides many helpful tips. Remember, direct, face-to-face contact is always best. After you have made the initial contact, consider having a meeting for those who seem interested.

## SHOWCASING YOUR GREEN AND HEALTHY LAWN

Declare your support for pesticide-free yards! Post the colorful [Pesticide Free Zone sign](#) in your lawn or garden and show that you're proud of your natural lawn. It will encourage discussion amongst friends, neighbors, and relatives on the benefits of eliminating pesticide use. The signs are perfect for homes, schools, parks, and businesses.

# REQUEST FOR NEIGHBORING PROPERTY'S PESTICIDE APPLICATION INFORMATION

Dear [INSERT PROPERTY OWNER/MANAGER NAME],

*I am writing as a neighbor concerned about your use of lawn chemicals. You might not be aware that herbicides are hazardous to the environment as well as to people and pets. Small children, due to their immature immune systems, are particularly vulnerable. Commonly used pesticides have been linked to everything from asthma to ADHD and cancer.*

*Obviously we cannot control all the pollution around us these days—but our lawns are an easy place to start. Many communities around the country are “going green” and we are hoping the wonderful [INSERT VILLAGE, TOWN, OR CITY NAME] will be one of them.*

*In the meantime, [INSERT WHY YOU ARE CONCERNED, SUCH AS “AS A PARENT OF SMALL CHILDREN”] I respectfully request to be notified prior to any chemical lawn applications.*

*Please don’t hesitate to call me if you have any questions. Thank you.*

*Sincerely,*

[YOUR NAME]

[CONTACT INFORMATION]

## APPEALING TO PRE-EXISTING GROUPS

Think about enlisting a school or community group, such as the local PTAs, sports team coaches, green committees, environmental commissions, etc., in your efforts. Specifically target those that may have a vested interest in public health and environmental issues such as parents, pet owners, or environmentally conscious residents. These groups offer a great avenue for getting out accurate and important information and, due to a similar cause, can be strong supporters of your work. When you approach an established group:

- Prepare a presentation tailored specifically to the interests of the group.
- Make sure to bring a handout or additional information to the meeting. You can create your own or use SPCP fact sheets.
- Get the word out by leveraging local organizations’ newsletters or networks of supporters. Even if the group is unable to formally join in your efforts, they may be able to further your work by passing along information to their subscribers.

## ACTIVIST'S TIPS



Lisa Nelson and Rose Ashby's quest to protect their children from pesticides began very humbly, at a backyard barbecue. Motivated by the concerns by several people they spoke to at the party, Lisa and Rose spent the next two days visiting gatherings and parks throughout their community. They succeeded in collecting 700 signatures of support for restricting pesticide use in parks and schools. Building upon this initial success, Lisa and Rose began a grassroots campaign through which the village of LaGrange, IL agreed to implement a NLC program in its schools and parks. Lisa and Rose were successful, in part, because of their willingness to do the hard work themselves—from identifying a landscaper who could provide NLC services to drafting educational pieces for a local newsletter. The following is a blurb written by Lisa and Rose that could easily be adapted for any activist's needs.

### **BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR - EXERCISE CARE WITH WEED CONTROL APPLICATIONS**

*The village would like to remind property owners to be mindful of the public way in which they or their lawn care providers treat their grass this spring and summer. Care should be exercised when applying fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, whether in liquid or pellet form, so that they are not spilled or spread onto public sidewalks as these can come into contact with unsuspecting passersby. Many products warn about exposure to pets and children. Please be a good neighbor and sweep up any overspill or hose down any overspray.*

*In addition, Illinois law requires that all lawn-care companies place a warning flag on treated lawns. The law also provides that neighbors be alerted in advance of a commercial lawn care application. If your "property abuts or is adjacent to the property of a customer of an applicator for hire [you] may receive prior notification of an application by contacting the applicator for hire and providing [your] name, address and telephone number." More information on Public Act 91-0099, which regulates lawn care applications, can be found online at [www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov).*

*As a public service to residents, additional information on natural lawn care for homeowners and related resources can be found online at [www.spcpweb.org](http://www.spcpweb.org).*

*Thank you for your cooperation.*



# RUNNING A GOOD MEETING

If you do decide to hold a meeting, here's some information that will help. The keys to an effective meeting are organization, brevity, interest, and the opportunity for everyone to speak their mind. Creating an environment where participants feel ownership over the cause is important in ensuring continued participation. In order to make certain that your meeting is successful, consider these few basic guidelines.

**PREPARATION.** It's important to realize that the actual meeting is only the middle of the process of hosting an event. As a rule of thumb, plan to spend at least one minute of planning for every minute in which you plan to meet. Preparation should include identifying who will play what role and considering some "what ifs" that may come up.

**TIMELINESS.** Be respectful of those who agreed to participate by starting and ending on time. People will be busy with work, family, and other obligations and will appreciate your efforts to be considerate of their schedules. By prioritizing timeliness, you will also show participants that time commitments associated with the campaign objectives are accurate.

## **WELCOME PARTICIPANTS.**

Establishing a sense of camaraderie and ownership is important in cultivating a community-based effort to change lawn and landscape policies. Start your meeting by letting people introduce themselves to the group. By asking attendees to describe, "who they are," "what group they represent," and "what brought them to the meeting," you will gain a lot of insight. This information will help to solidify the group and focus the purpose of your efforts.

## **COLLECT CONTACT INFORMATION.**

Remember to pass around a sign-up sheet to collect everyone's name, address, phone number, and email address. Follow up will be much easier with a clear record of who attended your event. Plus, the simple act of signing in tells people that their presence was noticed and important.



# RAISING AN ISSUE AT A PUBLIC MEETING

Decision makers often hold public forums or town hall meetings where they speak to and accept questions from the public. These meetings are great opportunity to make direct, personal contact with a decision maker and raise your concerns about unsustainable lawn and landscape practices. Asking questions will enable you to learn their viewpoint on the record. This information will be very helpful as you move forward and identify potential allies in your efforts. The following tips will help you to learn about public meetings, how to prepare remarks, and ask relevant questions when you attend.

**FIND OUT ABOUT UPCOMING MEETINGS IN YOUR COMMUNITY.** You can find out about upcoming meetings simply by calling local offices (mayoral, school districts, park district, state senators and representatives, etc.) and asking when the decision maker will be appearing. You can also check local papers, websites or sign up for newsletters that list public appearances and town hall events.

**GET ON THE MEETING AGENDA AHEAD OF TIME.** Oftentimes you will need to be on the meeting agenda in order to ensure you can speak. Contact decision makers or meeting organizers beforehand to ask to be included or what the process is. If you are unable to get onto the agenda, still attend the meeting. By simply showing up you can show your concern and start to become a recognizable figure. You also may be able to speak during a general period for public comments.

**PREPARE FOR AN UPCOMING MEETING IN YOUR COMMUNITY.** It's important to prepare the questions you want to ask and know the information you want to get across before the meeting. You may want to prepare a backup question or two in case your questions are asked. But remember, you don't want to give a speech. Be clear and keep your question or comments brief.

**ASK A QUESTION AT A MEETING IN YOUR COMMUNITY.** State your name and hometown before you ask your question to make sure the decision maker knows that you're a constituent. If you have expertise on the issue (e.g., you are a horticulturist, public health expert, environmental scientist) describe your background in five words or less. After your introduction, make one or two statements about the issue you are concerned about and why it is important to you and the community. You may also consider telling an engaging narrative, as opposed to relying on lists or facts, as a way to connect with your audience. Finish by asking the decision maker their position on the issue. You can also ask if they plan to take action to address your concerns.

## FOLLOW UP WITH DECISION MAKERS AFTER THE EVENT

If you were able to ask a question at an event, make sure to send a follow up thank-you note that contains any additional helpful information. If you were unable to ask your question, make sure to follow up and explain to your decision maker that although you were at the meeting you were unable to speak. This way you will get the opportunity to ask your question and request a response. See the section on writing a letter to your decision maker for more information on this process.

## ACTIVIST'S TIPS



Kim Stone was biking by her kids' school one day when she came across a landscape company spraying pesticides on the school grounds. Despite the school's legal obligation to notify parents prior to spraying pesticides, she had received no such notice. Kim was concerned about her children's exposure to pesticides, especially given the fact that she did not know exactly to what they had been exposed, and went into action. She was successful in her efforts to eliminate the use of pesticides by the School District because she enlisted the help of other parents who were also concerned about health risks to their children, and because of the group's ability to communicate the hazards of pesticide exposure to the School Board and to other parents and community members. One way Kim did this was to bring visuals to public meetings. Whether it was a stack of petitions (see below for Kim's petition) or printed materials on the health and environmental impacts of pesticides, Kim had concrete evidence of the community support for eliminating pesticides. She also had a greater impact because she provided science-based evidence of the health impact of pesticides on children (Kim recommends the [Ontario College of Family Physicians Pesticide Health Effects Review](#)), while also providing information on natural lawn care methods.

*Greetings Residents of [INSERT COMMUNITY NAME].*

*Request that the [INSTITUTION] of [COMMUNITY NAME] use chemical free lawn care.*

*We, the undersigned, are residents and taxpayers of [COMMUNITY NAME].*

*We urge the [INSTITUTION] of [COMMUNITY NAME] to use only natural lawn care practices, and not use pesticides/herbicides on playing fields and other areas on which our children play.*

*Scientific studies have linked lawn chemicals with childhood cancer; asthma; neurological, behavioral, and immune system disorders; endocrine disruption; and reproductive impairment, among others.*

*We ask that the [INSTITUTION] adhere to The Precautionary Principle, which states that "When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically."*

*We encourage the [INSTITUTION] to employ an expert in the area of natural lawn care to assist staff in the development and implementation of a successful natural turf management program.*

*Natural lawn care is safer for our children and we understand that it requires some weed tolerance.*

*Sincerely,*

*[YOUR NAME]*

*[CONTACT INFORMATION]*

# GETTING MEDIA ATTENTION

Media attention is one of the most effective means of drawing attention to your issue. By following a few steps, you can learn to target your message and contact media sources.

## GETTING MEDIA ATTENTION

Media coverage signals to decision makers that the public is concerned about the issue and that they should be concerned as well.

**GETTING MEDIA TO COVER YOUR ISSUE.** In order to get the attention of local newspapers and radio and television stations, you will need to write a news release and make some calls. A news release is a short, one- or two-page summary of the story you are pitching. Most news sources get a large number of news releases on any given day. Make sure the first sentence is eye-catching—then continue with the most compelling information in the lead sentence. Many lawn care activists have started their news releases with the impact of pesticides and other lawn and landscape chemicals on children. Research the particular concerns of your community before developing your news release to make sure your story is tailored to the appropriate interests. This will increase the chances of a media source picking up your story.

A news release usually includes the following information:

- What: One or two sentences describing your issue. Be sure to start with a strong lead and don't shy away from using superlatives.
- Where: Make sure to note your community, city, or state.
- When: Identify any upcoming events or meetings that are relevant to your cause. This could include upcoming votes or opportunities for others to get involved.
- Why: Write one to two paragraphs describing why the community should be concerned about this issue. Describe not only the issue but also its significance to the audience and connection to other related timely issues. Emphasize newsworthy elements such as a conflict or an unprecedented angle. Be objective. Note opinions by presenting them as quotations.
- Who: Don't forget to include your name and a phone number(s) where you can be reached 24 hours a day.



# WHAT IS NEWSWORTHY?

Use this guide to decide if a media source is likely to cover your story. If your story does not fit within these guidelines, try to adjust your message to make it more appealing. For more information on working with the media, the Community Media Workshop's guide, [Getting on Air, Oline & Into Print A Guide to Chicago-Area Media & Beyond](#), is a great resource.

## PUBLIC RECOGNITION

- Issue Recognition: Is the problem perceived as an issue or is it relatively unknown?
- Famous faces: Are the people or institutions involved in your effort well known?
- Trendiness: Is the issue currently fashionable? Is it timely?
- Proximity: Who will your efforts affect—and to what extent?

## IMPORTANCE

- Power: Does the event or campaign represent a significant power struggle such as a move by a powerful institution such as the government?
- Impact: What impact will the event or campaign have and on whom?
- Currency: Is the problem happening now?

## INTEREST

- Good story: Does your event or the campaign present a story with clear conflict and resolution?
- Human Interest: Does your event or campaign include characters with interesting stories? Can your audience relate to them?
- Memorable Emotions: Does it emphasize feelings in addition to ideas? What feelings does the story evoke?
- Visuals: Is there a potential for dramatic actions or photo opportunities?
- Cultural Resonance: Does the event or campaign reflect important cultural themes such as corruption, beating the odds, a small town or community group pulling together, etc.?
- Fresh Twist: Is there something unique, unusual, or funny about the event or campaign?

After it's written, distribute the news release to local media sources. You can usually find an email or fax number for your local media outlets on their websites. If you can, send the news release directly to a reporter; otherwise look for the number of the main newsroom. Also, make sure your information is in the body of your email rather than in an attachment, which may not be opened.

After you've sent the news release, follow up with a phone call. Don't be shy! Although calling reporters may seem daunting, they expect your call and often use outside sources for story ideas. The more you've prepared, the more comfortable you'll feel. Call the day after you send the news release—and make sure to call the reporter you sent your news release to. The best time is the late morning, early in the week. Have the news release in front of you when you call. The following script can help you if you're worried about getting tongue-tied. Keep your conversation short—your initial pitch should not exceed 30 seconds.

*Hi, I'm [YOUR NAME], a resident of [NAME OF YOUR CITY] and I am calling to let you know about a potential story that may be of interest to you. Do you have a moment to talk? [NOTE: IF YOU HAVE REACHED THE REPORTER AT A BAD TIME, MAKE SURE TO ASK WHEN A BETTER TIME WOULD BE TO CALL BACK—THEN MAKE SURE TO CALL BACK AT THAT SPECIFIC TIME].*

*[NOTE THE DETAILS OF YOUR STORY. MAKE SURE TO HIGHLIGHT WHO IS INVOLVED, WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO*

---

*[ACHIEVE AND WHY, AND WHAT YOU HOPE THE OUTCOME WILL BE. ALSO, BE READY WITH SPECIFIC DETAILS OR EXAMPLES TO BACK UP YOUR STORY AND THE NAMES AND NUMBERS OF POTENTIAL INTERVIEWEES].*

*I would love to help you develop this story. I sent you a news release but if you didn't receive it, I'd be happy to send it again. Are you interested in covering this issue? [IF THE ANSWER IS "NO," MAKE SURE TO ASK IF THERE IS SOMEONE ELSE AT THE STATION OR PAPER WHO MIGHT BE MORE INTERESTED].*

Remember, most journalists will not be able to promise to cover your story when you call. When they say they will "look into it and get back to you" that's all they can probably commit to at that moment. Be persistent but also be aware that if you push too hard you may alienate and deter the reporter from covering your story. Be aware that reporters often have too much to do in too little time. Offer to do whatever is necessary to make their job easier.

**GETTING MEDIA TO COVER YOUR EVENT.** In order to get media attention for your event, you will need to develop a short media advisory and call some news outlets. A media advisory is a one-page notice about an event. A media advisory contains five components:

- What: One sentence describing your event.
- Where and When: Information on the date, time, and location of your event.
- Why: Write one to two paragraphs describing why you are having the event and covered topics. Be sure to describe not only the issue the significance of the issue to the writer's readers and its connection to other issues currently in the headlines. Make sure to emphasize newsworthy elements such as a conflict or an unprecedented angle.
- Who: Make sure to include your name and contact information at the end so the reporter can call or email if they have any questions.

Be sure to follow the same rules for communicating with media as were covered in *Getting Media to Cover Your Issue*. Also, make sure to send your advisory out one week ahead of time to give reporters time to include your event into their busy schedules.

## OTHER RESOURCES

The Michigan Land Use Institute's, [Thinking like a Reporter](#), is a great guide to help you build relationships and develop materials in a way that are appealing to media sources. The Michigan Land Use Institute's, [Clear, Concise Writing](#), is another helpful guide that provides information on writing that is concise, clear, and grammatically correct. Also, make sure to check out the [Action Center](#) of the Union of Concerned Scientists for additional information specifically tailored to contacting legislators.

# WRITING A LETTER TO YOUR DECISION MAKER

Taking action by writing to your local decision maker directly is one important way in which to communicate the goals of your efforts. All policymakers read letters or emails that come through their office; however, handwritten, mailed letters can sometimes have the greatest impact. By taking the time to write a personal letter, you are conveying the message that this issue is of great importance to you. Encourage supporters of your efforts to do the same. Just a few handwritten letters arriving in a decision maker's office over a short period can greatly help to bring an issue to his or her attention. Follow these steps to create a well-written letter to your decision maker.

**ADDRESS YOUR LETTER CORRECTLY.** Make sure the name and address are accurate and spelled correctly.

**WRITE TO A DECISION MAKER REPRESENTING YOUR COMMUNITY.** Decision makers are only interested in the concerns of their community members. In the first paragraph, let them know that you are a constituent.

**ADDRESS ONLY ONE ISSUE PER LETTER.** A letter that addresses more than one topic dilutes the impact of all the topics. One particular issue will receive more attention and encourage a quicker response.

**TELL A STORY.** Telling a narrative that relays your message, as opposed to relying on lists or facts, is a powerful way to connect to an audience. Depending on the venue and time constraints, this tool can be an extremely effective method of conveying your issue that resonates with your reader or listeners.

**ASK FOR SOMETHING SPECIFIC.** Make sure to ask something of your decision maker. Request that a decision maker take action on a policy issue, or change their management procedures, or state their position on your issue—but it's important to make your query clear.

**KEEP IT SHORT.** Your letter should be readable and in an easily skimmed format. Decision makers have very limited amounts of time and they will not be disposed to reading a long missive. As such, make your points clear and concise.

**EXPRESS YOUR APPRECIATION.** Remember to be courteous and thank them for their time. If your decision maker has done something in the past that you have appreciated, make sure to express gratitude. This acknowledgment will demonstrate that you are paying attention and are serious in your efforts.

**INCLUDE YOUR RETURN ADDRESS.** By including your address, the reader will not only know how to contact you with follow up information but it will also confirm that you are a constituent.

**FOLLOW UP.** Oftentimes follow up letters have a larger effect than the original correspondence. In this communication, you should thank decision makers for any action taken or reiterate questions if you've received an unsatisfactory response.

*"Story is how we are reminded and how we remember. If we want it to be memorable, it must be a story...We are not built to memorize lists or unrelated facts. We are built to remember narrative."*

— Bill Harley Entertainer and Storyteller



**SAMPLE LETTER TO LOCAL DECISION MAKER.** The following is a sample level intended for the head of a school district or park district. Use this template in the creation of your own letter.

[DATE]

[YOUR NAME]

[YOUR ADDRESS]

[CONTACT'S FIRST AND LAST NAMES]

[CONTACT'S ADDRESS]

Dear Mr. /Ms. [CONTACT'S LAST NAME],

As [RELATIONSHIP TO INSTITUTION], I would like to encourage you to eliminate the use of lawn care pesticides on or near the [INSTITUTION'S] grounds to create and maintain a safe and sustainable environment for our children. Instead of using pesticides, we would like the [INSTITUTION] to convert to a natural lawn care system.

[INSERT PERSONAL STORY IF APPLICABLE OR EXPLANATION FOR WHY THIS ISSUE IS IMPORTANT TO YOU—AND OTHERS. MAKE SURE TO INTEGRATE INFORMATION ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH EFFECTS ASSOCIATED WITH PESTICIDE USE.]

I would like [INSTITUTION] to make the choice to protect the health of our community and our environment by [INSERT OBJECTIVE]. You can make a huge difference by applying the basic principles of natural lawn care. See the enclosed [fact sheet](#) to make some very simple changes to the maintenance practices of your lawn care program.

I would be happy to collaborate with you to make these changes. [DON'T FORGET TO EXPRESS GRATITUDE FOR PAST WORK OF THE DECISION MAKER AND FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ YOUR LETTER.]

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

# MANAGING A LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGN

Another way to communicate your message is through a letter-writing campaign. Remember, however, that sustained, direct, and personal contact with decision makers is usually the most effective way to achieving your goal. Few people take the time to write directly to their decision maker. As such, several letters sent at opportune moments (such as before a vote) can sway an important vote or decision. The following tips will guide you in your own letter-writing campaign.

Always encourage people to write their own letters rather than just signing a preprinted letter. However, you should provide a sample letter that mentions key points to address. An effective letter will include a description of the issue in plain language, a brief summary of the background of the issue, and a clear articulation of what you would like the recipient to do.

You may also want to consider hosting a letter-writing campaign or hosting a table at a local event where people can write their own letter. Remember to bring copies of the sample letter, addresses for local media, addresses and names of local decision makers, pen, stamps, envelopes, literature about your cause, and a few volunteers to help discuss the issue with interested parties.

# HAVING A PRODUCTIVE PHONE CALL WITH A DECISION MAKER

Calling a decision maker is a great way to make contact in a way that is more personal than writing a letter or email. A few well-timed phone calls in a short period can dramatically bring an issue to a decision maker's attention. Here are some tips to guide you through that first call.

**LET THEM KNOW AT THE OUTSET THAT YOU ARE A CONSTITUENT.** Decision makers are much more apt to take your call and listen to your opinion if you are a member of the community they serve. Make sure to establish your connection to the decision maker early on in the conversation.

**KNOW YOUR FACTS.** Have some compelling information on the health impacts of conventional lawn care in front of you so you can offer an informed response to questions. Be prepared to specifically discuss the issue and recommend to the decision maker what they should do.

**NOTE YOUR EXPERTISE.** If you have some professional experience on the issue make sure to note that in the call. If you don't, you can discuss why this subject matter is of importance to you. Briefly mention how it came to your attention. Just because you are not an academically or professionally trained expert does not mean your opinion does not matter.

**BE BRIEF.** Be mindful of the decision maker's time limits. By preparing before the phone call, you can ensure that your call stays brief and focused.

**BE TIMELY.** Timeliness is of paramount importance when determining the best time to place your call. Getting the issue at the forefront of the decision maker's mind prior to a big decision, such as a vote or passage of new legislation, is essential to ensuring his or her support.

# APPROACHING AND MEETING COMMUNITY DECISION MAKERS

## HOW TO GET A MEETING WITH YOUR DECISION MAKER

Securing a personal, sit-down meeting with your decision maker is an excellent opportunity to discuss your work. Decision makers are interested in the concerns of their constituents and are more likely to act upon strongly supported issues. As the topic of natural lawn maintenance versus pesticides is probably a new issue for your decision maker, having a face-to-face discussion would be especially effective.

**PLAN ADEQUATELY.** Before your meeting, take the time to think through what you hope to accomplish and how best to go about it. Some useful questions to consider as you prepare for your meeting include: 1) What is your decision maker's position on the issue; 2) What has your decision maker done in the past with regard to this issue; 3) What is your decision maker's background on the issue and what materials should you bring to provide additional information; 4) What action would you like your decision maker to take; and 5) Will your position be helped by bringing any other people to the meeting.

**REQUEST A MEETING.** You can request a meeting multiple ways. If the decision maker has a very busy schedule and an office staff, you may want to consider sending a formal request letter or fax. In the letter be sure to state the issue you would like to discuss as well as your available times. Also, don't forget to note any relevant credentials and your affiliation with the decision maker.

**FOLLOW UP BY PHONE.** Within 24 hours of sending a fax, or a few days after having sent a letter, call the decision maker, or their scheduler, to confirm they received your letter and arrange a time to meet.

## HOW TO HAVE A GOOD MEETING WITH YOUR DECISION MAKER

**BEFORE THE MEETING.** Prior to your meeting, take the time to clearly identify what you want from your decision maker. If you have other supporters coming to the meeting, discuss and confirm who will say what and when. If more than one person is attending, make sure to assign a group leader who will be in charge of keeping the meeting on track and raising any points or issues that have not been covered. Finally, it is always helpful to stage a practice meeting to ensure that everyone is comfortable with his or her role.

**DURING THE MEETING.** For the meeting, business attire is appropriate. Don't let your issue be diminished or overshadowed by your appearance. When you arrive, make sure to introduce yourself, identify where you are from, and thank your decision maker for taking the time to meet. During the meeting, take the lead in facilitating the conversation. Be direct with the decision maker concerning the steps you would like them to take and the reasons why. Bring additional reference materials with you to leave behind. Remember, if you're asked a question to which you don't know the answer, be honest and offer to get back to the decision maker with a response. End the meeting by asking a direct question, one that requires a yes or no response. For example, "Do you plan on supporting our efforts in the future?" This will force the decision maker to articulate their position while allowing you to gauge the extent to which they will support you. Don't forget to thank the decision maker again at the end of the meeting for his or her time even if they don't express support for your work.

---

**AFTER THE MEETING.** After the meeting, immediately write a brief summary of the event including any follow up questions and remarks from your decision maker. In addition, follow up with a thank you letter or email. This is also a great place to include any additional information that your decision maker may have requested.

## ENGAGING ONLINE

The web is a great venue to connect with people who share similar interests. Utilizing web-based resources can effectively build the capacity of your campaign. Use online resources to give and receive campaign and news updates, provide information on ways in which to participate, and provide interactive forums for supporters. With all these venues, it's easy to become overwhelmed. This guide will provide you with the information necessary to select the online tools that will help support and build your campaign.



### CONNECTING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

The following list highlights the most popular social media websites.



**TWITTER.** [Twitter](#) is a social networking service that enables its users to send and read messages called tweets. Tweets are short, text-only posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the author's profile page. Users may subscribe to or follow other authors' tweets to stay informed. Twitter is a great venue for both collecting information—by following experts, decision makers, and supporters—and for broadcasting important messages to your fellow campaigners. You can also use Twitter to lead your followers to your other social media sites by including links in your tweets.



**FACEBOOK.** There are many ways to use [Facebook](#) to support your cause. For example, you can use your personal Facebook account to talk to your friends and family members about your work. Alternatively, you can set up a Facebook page specifically for your campaign. For more information on setting up a Facebook page, visit Facebook's [help page](#).

Facebook pages allow businesses, organizations, and causes to communicate and share information. Your Facebook page should be a representation of your campaign's goals. You can achieve this by making sure the "About" section of your page is accurate and relevant. Your Facebook page should be up to date with your campaign activities, information for upcoming meetings, and any successes you have achieved. Use the "Like" pages feature to follow organizations that you wish to receive updates from.

---

**Blogs.** A blog is a great tool to promote your campaign, engage with others, and recruit support for your efforts. Blogs are not only easy to update but they also provide an interactive forum. Several websites provide blog-hosting capacity including [WordPress](#), [Tumblr](#), and [Blooger](#). The following tips will help you in the development and maintenance of an effective blog.

- Select a name that reflects the purpose of the blog and is easy to find with a search engine. Make sure to be clear with the purpose of your blog by identifying the vision statement to define success for your campaign.
- Keep your design simple and focus on the content. A one-paragraph blog post with a few links to other websites will get the most attention. As blog posts are displayed chronologically, use categories, tags, and keywords to make searching your blog easier. For example, a post on the basics of natural lawn care could have the tags “environment,” “children’s health,” “pollution,” or “savings.”
- Keep posts short and focus on impact. Make sure to post often to increase the likelihood that people will read your blog.
- Drive traffic to your blog by reading and commenting on other peoples’ blogs with similar interests. Don’t blatantly promote your work but if you make a good point and provide a link to your blog in your comment people may just click on your site to check it out.
- On your own blog, make sure not to over-moderate comments. Delete only those that are offensive or inappropriate, not those that you disagree with. This will ensure that your blog is truly participatory.
- Google and other search engines are more likely to show your website higher on the results page if you have linked to other websites.

**Online Petition Websites.** Many campaigners have found an online petition to be a useful resource. Online petitions are an easy way to build measurable support. Multiple websites provide online petitions including [Change.org](#), [Avaaz.org](#), and [iPetitions.com](#). Use online petitions carefully and responsibly. To ensure the legitimacy of your petition, you may want to require signers to provide their whole name or email address for verification.

**OTHER ONLINE COMMUNITIES.** A site like [Everyblock.com](#) serves as an online meeting space where people talk about issues that relate to their neighborhood. This website is a great place to post information about upcoming events or meetings and to reach out to potential supporters. If this site is not available in your community, look for neighborhood or community-focused message boards. Consider signing up to receive newsletters of like-minded organizations.

## USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO STAY INFORMED

Following people, organizations, and community groups online is an easy way to stay informed as to what is happening in your community. By putting in the time to set up an online presence, you’ll receive a constant stream of information that will help you stay on top of things.

**FOLLOW THE EXPERTS.** You can start by following the expert organizations that work on natural lawn care (NLC) mentioned throughout this document. Connecting with them through their social media is an easy way to receive important updates. Consider following [Safer Pest Control Project](#), [Grassroots Environmental Education](#), [Pesticide Action Network North America](#), [Beyond Pesticides](#), [Lawn to Lake](#), [Improving Kids' Environment](#), [Midwest Ecological Landscaping Association](#), [Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides](#), [Say NO to Chemical Lawn](#), [Safer Chemicals](#), [Healthy Families](#), and [Children's Environmental Health Network](#).

**FOLLOW YOUR DECISION MAKERS.** It's a good idea to follow those whom you want to influence—school district officials, organization leaders, and elected officials. Social media websites provide easy access to decision makers and offer a great venue to raise your concerns. Remember, as with any form of communication, be polite and include trusted information.

**FOLLOW YOUR SUPPORTERS.** Following your supporters is a great way to strengthen your relationships. Besides using social media to share information, you can use it to express gratitude for their continued support.

**SIMPLIFYING INFORMATION GATHERING.** There are many resources available to stay up to date on NLC happenings. Consider using a resource to aggregate many web resources into one conveniently located spot. Rich Site Summary (RSS) is a format for delivering regularly changing web content. Many news-related sites, web blogs, and other online publishers designate their content as an RSS Feed. An RSS Feed allows you to stay informed by accessing the latest content from the sites you're interested in. You can view RSS Feeds by subscribing to a Feed Reader or News Aggregator. Popular Readers include [Google Reader](#), [Newsgator](#), [RSSOwl](#), [Reeder](#), [FeedReader](#), [Bloglines](#), [Feedly](#), or [FeedDemon](#). Once you have your Feed Reader, it is a matter of finding sites that have RSS content and adding their RSS feed to the list of feeds on Feed Reader. Many sites display a small icon with the acronyms RSS, XML, or RDF to let you know a feed is available. For a simpler approach, consider using [Google Alerts](#). Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your queries.



# COMPLETE LIST OF RESOURCES

## RESOURCES LISTED IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Karr, Catherine J., Solomon, Gina M., Brock-Utne, Alice C. (2005) Health Effects of Common Home and Garden Pesticides

United States Environmental Protection Agency. (n.d.). Why Children May be Especially Sensitive to Pesticides. Retrieved from [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

Beyond Pesticides. (n.d.). Health Effects of 30 Commonly Used Lawn Pesticides. Retrieved from <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/>

United States Environmental Protection Agency. (1999). 1999 Preliminary Data Summary of Urban Stormwater Best Management Practices. Retrieved from [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

Center for Watershed Protection. (2002). Fact Sheet #1: Lawn Care Practices/Reducing Overfertilization. Skills for Protecting your Stream: Retrofitting your Backyard.

McGrath, M. (n.d.). Keeping Your Lawn on Drugs Will Cost you \$4 Billion. Retrieved from <http://www.wtop.com/902/2733096/Keeping-your-lawn-on-drugs-will-cost-you-4-billion>

Hinderer, Julie Mida and Michael W. Murray, Ph.D. (2011). Feast and Famine in the Great Lakes: How Nutrients and Invasive Species Interact to Overwhelm the Coasts and Starve Offshore Waters October 2011 National Wildlife Federation.

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.(2012). Illinois Integrated Water Quality Report and Section 303(d) List, 2012

United States Geological Survey. (1999). The Quality of our Nations Waters, Nutrients and Pesticides. Washington, DC.

Beyond Pesticides. (n.d.). Environmental Effects of 30 Commonly Used Lawn Pesticides. Retrieved from [www.beyondpesticides.org](http://www.beyondpesticides.org)

Plan for Nature: Community Action Strategies. Chicago: Chicago Wilderness.

Chicago Wilderness. Water: The Quality Test. Chicago: Chicago Wilderness.

Morris, J., & Bagby, J. (2008). Measuring Environmental Value for Natural Lawn and Garden Care Practices. International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment.

Safer Pest Control Project. [www.spcpweb.org/yards](http://www.spcpweb.org/yards)

Beyond Pesticides. <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/lawn/>

GRASSROOTS Environmental Education. <http://www.grassrootsinfo.org/ghlpindex.html>

Environment and Human Health Inc. <http://www.ehh.org/>

Safelawns.org. <http://www.safelawns.org/>

Children's Environmental Health Network. [cehn.org](http://cehn.org)

Pesticide Action Network North America. <http://www.panna.org/>

City of Boulder Healthy Parks = Healthy People Campaign. (2012). <http://www.bouldercolorado.gov/files/BoulderHealthyParks.pdf>

Safer Pest Control Project. Read Your Weeds. <http://spcpweb.org/factsheets/ReadYourWeeds.pdf>

Safer Pest Control Project. Laws to Protect Your From Outdoor Pesticides. <http://spcpweb.org/factsheets/RightToKnowFactsheet.pdf>

Safer Pest Control Project. Municipal Pesticide Reduction Toolkit. <http://spcpweb.org/attachments/SPCPMunicipalToolkitFinal.pdf>

The City of Evanston Sustainable Pest Control and Pesticide Reduction Policy. <http://www.cityofevanston.org/pdf/20-R-10IntegratedPestManagement3-16-2010.pdf>

The State of Illinois's Order to Reduce the Environmental Impacts of Illinois State Government Operations. <http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/green/Documents/EO11%202009.pdf>

Town of Marblehead Board of Health: Organic Pest Management Regulations. <http://ma-marblehead.civicplus.com/DocumentView.aspx?DID=292>

Tri County Integrated Pest and Vegetation Management: Model Policy. <http://www.lhwmp.org/home/ChemToxPesticides/documents/IPMTriCountyModelPolicy.pdf>

Town of Plainville, Connecticut. Resolution of the Town of Plainville Town Council. <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/documents/paderewski%20park%20resolution.pdf>

Connecticut's Public Act No. 07-168. <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2007/ACT/PA/2007PA-00168-R00HB-05234-PA.htm>

Washington, D.C.'s Pesticide Education and Control Amendment Act of 2012. [http://app.cfo.dc.gov/services/fiscal\\_impact/pdf/spring09/FINAL%20FIS%20Pesticide%20Education%20and%20Control%20Amendment%20Act%20of%202012.pdf](http://app.cfo.dc.gov/services/fiscal_impact/pdf/spring09/FINAL%20FIS%20Pesticide%20Education%20and%20Control%20Amendment%20Act%20of%202012.pdf)

The Village of Franklin Park Sustainable Pest Control Policy. <http://spcpweb.org/attachments/FranklinParkFullResolutionText.pdf>

State of Illinois Lawn Care Products Application and Notice Act (Public Act 91-0099). <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=1597&ChapterID=36>

Beyond Pesticides. Tools for Change. <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/lawn/activist/index.htm>

Safer Pest Control Project. Model Contract Specifications for Transitioning Municipal Properties to Natural Lawn Care. <http://spcpweb.org/attachments/SPCPMunicipalToolkitFinal.pdf>

Alameda County. Alameda County Waste Management Authority & Alameda County Source Reduction and Recycling Board. [http://www.stopwaste.org/docs/bfl\\_maintenance\\_specification.doc](http://www.stopwaste.org/docs/bfl_maintenance_specification.doc)

City and County of San Francisco. Request for Proposal: Integrated Pest Management Service for City Owned Buildings and Properties. [http://www.up3project.org/documents/contracting/Sample\\_bid\\_docs/San\\_Francisco/RFP83518Posted\\_081507.pdf](http://www.up3project.org/documents/contracting/Sample_bid_docs/San_Francisco/RFP83518Posted_081507.pdf)

City of Seattle, City Purchasing Office. Request for Proposal: Integrated Pest Management Services. <http://www.cityofseattle.net/purchasing/VendorContracts/Docs/0000001855RFP.doc>

Safer Pest Control Project. Pesticide Zone Sign. <http://spcpweb.org/attachments/orderform.pdf>

Safer Pest Control Project. Natural Lawn Care for Homeowners. <http://www.spccpweb.org/factsheets/NaturalLawnCareforHomeowners.pdf>

Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County. Eco-Landscaping Guide. <http://www.swancc.org/index.php/resources/eco-landscaping-guide>

Safer Pest Control Project. A Bee-Friendly Garden is a Pesticide Free Garden. [http://spcpweb.org/factsheets/Bee\\_Factsheet2.pdf](http://spcpweb.org/factsheets/Bee_Factsheet2.pdf)

Safer Pest Control Project. Compost Tea Brewing Manufacturers & Distributors. [http://www.spccpweb.org/factsheets/Compost\\_Tea\\_Companies.pdf](http://www.spccpweb.org/factsheets/Compost_Tea_Companies.pdf)

Safer Pest Control Project. Products for Your Natural Lawn. [http://www.spccpweb.org/factsheets/Lawn\\_Fertilizer\\_Factsheet3.pdf](http://www.spccpweb.org/factsheets/Lawn_Fertilizer_Factsheet3.pdf)

Safer Pest Control Project. Natural Lawn Care for Homeowners Calendar. <http://www.spccpweb.org/factsheets/NLCCalendar.pdf>

Safer Pest Control Project. A Tale of Two Families. <http://spcpweb.org/download.php?factsheet=taleFinalColor.pdf>

Paul Tukey's The Organic Lawn Care Manual: A Natural, Low-Maintenance System for a Beautiful, Safe Lawn. <http://www.amazon.com/Organic-Lawn-Care-Manual-Low-Maintenance/dp/1580176496>

Safer Pest Control Project. Midwest Natural Lawn Care Companies. <http://www.spccpweb.org/factsheets/MidwestLawncareCompanies.pdf>

Beyond Pesticides. Safety Source for Pest Management. <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/infoservices/pcos/index.htm>

Metro Regional Government. Grow Smart Grow Safe: A Consumer Guide to Lawn and Garden Products. <http://www.lhwmp.org/home/gsgs/>

Safer Pest Control Project. Talking to Your Neighbors about Pesticides. Retrieved from <http://www.spccpweb.org/factsheets/neighborsFinalColor.pdf>

Illinois General Assembly. <http://www.ilga.gov/>

Ontario College of Family Physicians Pesticide Health Effects Review. <http://www.ocfp.on.ca/docs/pesticides-paper/executive-summary-ocfp-pesticide-health-effects-review.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

Community Media Workshop. 2010 Getting on Air, Online, & Into Print A Guide to Chicago-Area Media & Beyond. Chicago. Retrieved from <http://www.gifttool.com/shop/ShopProductDetails?ID=1253&VER=1&LNG=EN&PID=54976&DID=716>

Michigan Land Use Institute. Activist's Toolkit. Retrieved from [www.mlui.org](http://www.mlui.org)

Union of Concerned Scientists. Retrieved from Union of Concerned Scientists Action Center. Retrieved from [www.ucsusa.org/action](http://www.ucsusa.org/action)

Twitter. [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

Facebook. [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

WordPress. [www.wordpress.org/](http://www.wordpress.org/)

Tumblr. [www.tumblr.com](http://www.tumblr.com)

Blooger. [www.blooger.com](http://www.blooger.com)

Google Reader. [www.google.com/reader](http://www.google.com/reader)

Newsgator. [www.newsgator.com/](http://www.newsgator.com/)

RSS Owl. [www.rssowl.org/](http://www.rssowl.org/)

Reader. <http://reederapp.com/>

Feed Reader. <http://www.feedreader.com/>

Bloglines. <http://www.bloglines.com/>

Feedly. <http://www.feedly.com/>

FeedDemon. <http://www.feeddemon.com/>

Google Alerts. <http://www.google.com/alerts>





Madison, WI  
773.878.8245  
[www.MidwestGrowsGreen.org](http://www.MidwestGrowsGreen.org)