

LIVING LANDSCAPES MATTER



Yards provide a safe place for families to gather and for children and pets to play. But did you know these managed landscapes, including your lawn, also provide a host of environmental benefits?

“ Having a lawn and being a good environment steward are not mutually exclusive. Grass is a vital part of our living landscapes that contribute to our communities, our families and our health. ”

Kris Kiser,
President and CEO of the
Outdoor Power Equipment
Institute (OPEI)

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A LAWN?



FILTERS AND CAPTURES RUNOFF

Hardscapes, parking lots, driveways and roads turn rainwater into fast-moving, storm water runoff. Grass slows down and absorbs runoff, while also cleansing water of impurities and dust. Rainwater filtered through a healthy lawn can be 10 times less acidic than water running off a hard surface.¹



REDUCES HEAT

Grass dissipates the heat island effect caused by asphalt, concrete and other hardscapes. Lawns can be 31 degrees cooler than asphalt and 20 degrees cooler than bare soil.



IMPROVES AIR QUALITY

Grass also plays a vital role in capturing dust, smoke particles and other pollutants.² Without grass, these pollutants will remain in the air we breathe, resulting in more “code red” air quality days.



SEQUESTERS CARBON DIOXIDE

Lawns are the largest carbon sink in the U.S. They suck up and remove greenhouse gas carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Grass sequesters carbon so well, that it outweighs the carbon used for maintaining the lawn by as much as seven-fold.³



GENERATES OXYGEN

A turf area of 50' x 50' produces enough oxygen to meet the daily needs of a family of 4.⁴



SUPPORTS BIODIVERSITY

Grass, trees, shrubs and other plants provide food and habitat for birds and small mammals. Insects, spiders and worms live among the grass blades and below the surface, supporting wildlife.



CONTROLS SOIL EROSION

Grass controls erosion through its natural, dense and fibrous root system. Without grass, soil erodes into streams and lakes, muddying the waters and limits how sunlight penetrates the water. The nutrients and chemicals carried with soil can cause algae blooms, which steal oxygen from the water and kill fish.⁵

LAWN OR NO LAWN IS NOT THE QUESTION.

So how do we maintain a living landscape – even under drought conditions?

- 1 Choose the right grass** for your climate zone and lifestyle. Some – such as buffalo and Bermuda grass – require very little water and survive foot traffic, children’s play and pets well.
- 2 Don’t overwater.** Less water makes grass work harder so roots grow deeper in search of moisture. It then does a better job of trapping carbon and releasing oxygen.
- 3 Go brown.** With less water, grass slows down, goes dormant and turns golden brown. It will “green up” again when the rains return.
- 4 Diversify.** Incorporate native plants with adaptive plants and grasses. Add pollinator plants for local bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other animals and insects.

For more information, go to:

www.opei.org/stewardship/



Source: 1. The Lawn Institute, <http://www.thelawninstitute.org/pages/environment/benefits-of-lawn/grass-purifies-water/> 2. The Lawn Institute, <http://www.thelawninstitute.org/pages/environment/benefits-of-lawn/air-quality-and-turfgrass/>
3. U.S. Department of Agriculture, <http://www.reelis.usda.gov/web/crisprojectpages/0223645-evaluation-of-turfgrasses-for-stress-tolerance-in-a-transition-zone-environment.html>
4. The Lawn Institute, <http://www.scienturfsod.com/growing-great-lawns/lawns-and-the-air-that-we-breathe/> 5. Kansas Green Yards, <http://www.kansasgreennyards.org/p.aspx?tabid=35>