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## Topdressing the lawn – it's not just for gardens

Many have felt the pleasure of pushing a trowel into a garden bed where the soil is loose, airy and rich with nutrients. It's no wonder these garden beds grow the best flowers and vegetables year in and year out. It's no secret, healthy soil equals excellent plants.

### Supporting healthy soil

People care for their landscape beds and gardens by topdressing and adding organics sometimes as often as twice a season, spring and fall. Plants use the organic matter and available nutrients to grow, pushing roots through the excellent soil. They know the healthier the soil the better the crop will be this season and next.

Unfortunately, most of our lawns suffer from a lack of organic matter in the soil. With time the organic content of

the soil becomes depleted and needs to be replenished. A common mistake is to assume that fertilizer is all that you need to keep a lawn healthy. Fertilizing provides the essential nutrients to the grass so it can grow thick and strong. Fertilizers come in lots of formulations and from various sources. Be it man made products, organic based or a combination of the two, these applications provide the necessary nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and other nutrients the lawn needs to grow.

### Improving soil composition

Ever try to stick a trowel into your lawn? How about something smaller, like a ruler or sharp #2 pencil? What will happen? In most cases you can't stick the trowel in the lawn and the pencil will break off in your hand. Fine, grab a screw driver and push or pound it in if you must.

Compacted clay soil is common throughout Cuyahoga County. Heavy, compacted clay dirt is not ideal for growing any plants, including grass. Adding organics as a part of the lawn care program will improve the composition of the soil improving the health of your lawn.

Lawns grown in good soil are much healthier and are easier to care for and therefore cost less to maintain in order to keep a lush, green carpet under your feet. Healthy turf grass with a strong root system is more drought and pest resistant, crowds out the weeds, recovers more easily from damage or stress and simply looks better.

A lawn care program should include top dressing with organics at least once a year, no different than your garden beds. Turf grass studies show that lawns benefit from as little as one cubic foot of compost per 1,000 square feet of lawn area. Adding even more organic matter is more effective and easy to do and does not smother the lawn. In combination with aeration, top dressing over several seasons will begin to build the composition of the soil so your lawn can grow healthy and strong.

