



Changing the Way You Relax

Greetings from Jaime!



Change is in the air, water and soil... Given our strong commitment to being more environmentally aware, our management

team spent five full days attending the NOFA (Northeast Organic Farmers Association) Land Care Conference held in Massachusetts last month. Speakers from the green industry as well as university scientists lectured on subjects ranging from actual case studies, soil biology and fertility requirements to native plants and wildlife habitats.

The most important point brought back to Deehan Landscaping is that we've been overworking our soils and creating *open systems* that are wasteful. One of the largest culprits is the typical "American Lawn". Our lawns are usually made up of a near monoculture of intolerant and delicate turf grasses that require incredible amounts of tender loving care. Imagine the maintenance needed for conventional

turf care. Pre-emergent herbicides are applied to prevent weed seeds from germinating, fertilizers containing synthetic nitrogen sources are used to darken the color and make turf grow more vigorously. The turf begins to grow at record speed and many desire to have it cut too short, creating an opportunistic environment for weed infestation. Weeds are sprayed with toxic herbicides which also kill or reduce the beneficial insects & soil organisms. Grass clippings are collected and disposed of as "trash" thereby removing about 50% naturally available organic nitrogen. This is an *open system* where constant feeding, watering and chemical weed control is needed to obtain desired results.

How would your lawn change if you considered viable alternatives? You'd have to decide what's most important, the environment or a "perfect lawn". Is it really so bad to have your lawn look a bit different from your neighbors? Could your tolerance for weeds be increased? Wouldn't you like a lower maintenance lawn that retains its natural green color longer in the summer with progressively less irrigation? You might chose a "Freedom Lawn" where a mix of grass species and legumes create a diverse habitat. The "Freedom Lawn" is one where everything that survives under the blade of the mower is considered lawn. It's cut at 3.5 to 4" tall and naturally crowds out weeds. Compost is added at the time of aeration and over seeding as a soil amendment to improve soil pH and nutrient uptake. Soil biology is improved and brought back to life as the soil fauna increases. A partnership is created where soil microbes encourage deeper healthier root systems that require less watering, and after a few years they may not need to be watered at all (except in the very worst of drought conditions)! Grass clippings are recycled back to the earth for reuse. This is a *closed system* that uses fewer resources such as mined fertilizers and fuel to get products from manufacturer to the wholesaler, to the retailer, to Deehan Landscaping and finally to our clients. Tax dollars are better spent on other services rather than uselessly filling up landfills with bags of grass clippings. Our creeks and streams aren't being contaminated with nitrogen and phosphorus from storm water runoff... Sounds great to me!

Jaime Deehan, Founder & President



...keeping our clients informed

DROUGHT TOLERANT NATIVE PLANTS



Wintergreen Groundcover



Witchhazel



Evergreen Wood Fern



Phlox, Flowering Moss

Cate's Corner

Q: With so many fancy cultivars to chose from, why should I use native plant species?

A: The wonders of plant science and breeders have cross pollinated, grafted and propagated thousands of preferred traits in plants to provide magnificent color, berries, smooth bark, rough bark, variegation, blue foliage, drought tolerance - you name it, you got it. Some cultivars have become fussier requiring more fertility, irrigation, and pruning. When European settlers moved to this country, they brought their favorite plants. Many of these plants have "escaped" from the ornamental landscape and have become invasive in natural areas. Invasive plants crowd out natives and smother wildlife habitats. Barberry is a common example. In western MA, barberry has taken over thousands of acres and has become the only mid-level plant within the understory of the deciduous forests. It's dense canopy with prickly thorns throughout has made it less than hospitable to most wildlife and created a desolate, impenetrable forest.

Native plants are important in our landscape because they're already adapted to our specific climate and soils. They don't need supplemental irrigation during periods of drought and they keep your gardens looking wonderfully natural! These plants encourage biodiversity in our backyards. They are host plants for butterfly larvae and beneficial insects that fight off pests. Who wouldn't want performers like that in their landscape?



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NATURAL ORGANIC LAND CARE

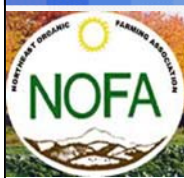
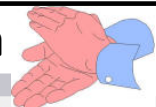


Top 10 Benefits of Organic Land Care:

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1. **Safety**, for humans, animals, insects and the planet
2. **Better Health**, for humans, animals, the lawns and the planet
3. **Water Conservation & Preservation**, since water does not often become contaminated in organic systems, and watering requirements are far less than with synthetic programs
4. **Soil Health & Sustainability**, since organic land care builds organic matter and regenerates life within the soil
5. **Pest Reduction**, since insects tend to be more attracted to out-of-balance synthetic modified systems
6. **Resource Conservation**, since synthetic fertilizers are derived from fossil fuels and organic systems encourage recycling, and because organic systems emphasize less mowing
7. **Financial Savings** through time, since organic systems become more independent as the soil is improved
8. **Environmental Preservation**, including a reduction in greenhouse gases and global warming
9. **Noise Reduction** from decreased reliance on power equipment
10. **Environmental Awareness** from the organic practitioners, who don't rely on "four-step plans" and instead tend to become stewards of the land.

Training & Certification



Congratulations to Cate Feck & Jaime Deehan on the successful completion of the NOFA (Northeast Organic Farming Association) Organic Land Care Professional Course and their Professional Accreditations with NOFA! Each passed a rigorous exam after the five day course and pledge to follow the *Standards for Organic Land Care: Practices for Design and Maintenance of Ecological Landscapes*. **Contact us, the first and only Virginia Accredited Organic Land Care Professionals, for more info!**