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Organic Land Care Practices: New Approaches to Landscape Water Savings

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(WaterPlow Press)

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Outline

- 1. Why organic land and lawn care?**
- 2. Northeast Organic Farmers Association (NOFA)**
- 3. NOFA *Standards for Organic Land Care* (OLC)**
 - Core principles
 - 2009 standards (4th edition)
 - 2011 standards (5th edition), draft Water Section
- 4. NOFA OLC accreditation**
 - OLC and Organic Lawn and Turf courses
- 5. Additional information**

Why Organic Land & Lawn Care?

- **Conventional landscapes: water-intensive**
 - Resource intensive: water, chemicals, energy
 - Difficult and costly to maintain
 - Pollution, health risks to humans and wildlife
 - A constant war battling Nature
 - Excessive watering, disease, “Your lawn on drugs”
- **Organic: water-thrifty**
 - Thrive on natural rainfall and local climate conditions
 - Native and noninvasive turf and plants
 - Build healthy soil systems—moisture retention, plant vitality
 - Support natural drainage and infiltration of stormwater
 - Protect water quality—no synthetic fertilizers and chemicals
 - Promotes *very* local food production
 - Reduced energy requirements = reduced embedded water in energy

‘Organic soil has about 20% better moisture retention than conventional soil (treated with synthetic chemicals).’

‘The Little League ball field that we manage was irrigated only 3 times during the summer of 2009. By following NOFA’s organic land care principles and watering only when needed, we realized not only water savings, but also reduced maintenance time and costs.’

*–Professional lawn and turf manager,
Westchester County, NY*



“Water Savings. Tests show that most home gardeners use less than half of the water agricultural production needs to produce a crop. Drip irrigation saves even more. And unlike in agriculture, fields aren’t flooded and huge vats of water aren’t needed to cool down the harvest.”

–Rosalind Creasy,

EDIBLE LANDSCAPING: 2nd Edition

(Dec. 2010)



PHOTO: ROBIN BACHTLER CUSHMAN



ROSALIND CREASY

Who would think humble romaine lettuces could form the centerpiece of a decorative patio garden bed? To create this design, purchase an inexpensive, vertical wood trellis, cut off the two legs, then paint it an inviting color, such as this soft purple. After laying it on the prepared soil, plant a single lettuce in each square. As the lettuce grows, continually harvest a few outer leaves from each plant to maintain the design. Oregano, cilantro, mustard, flax and nonedible hens-and-chicks frame the vignette.

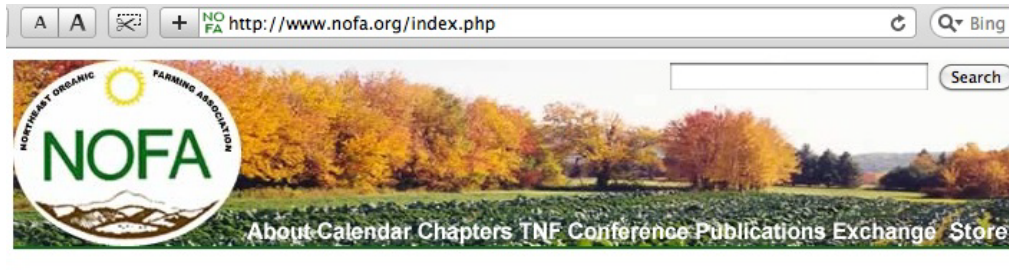
Source:

“Create an Edible Landscape, Beautify your yard and save money, energy and water by designing a multifunctional landscape that incorporates plenty of edibles.”

By Rosalind Creasy, Mother Earth News, Oct/Nov. 2010.

<http://www.motheearthnews.com/organic-gardening/edible-landscape-z10m0sto.aspx>

Northeast Organic Farmers Association (NOFA)



Policy
[Comments to the Justice Dept on Ag Concentration and Competition Issues](#)
[Saving The Gulf The Right Way](#)

The Northeast Organic Farming Association is a non-profit organization of nearly 5,000 farmers, gardeners and consumers working to promote healthy food, organic farming practices and a cleaner environment. NOFA has chapters in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont.



"An organic farm, properly speaking, is not one that uses certain methods and substances and avoids others; it is a farm whose structure is formed in imitation of the structure of a natural system that has the integrity, the independence and the benign dependence of an organism"

- Wendell Berry, "The Gift of Good Land"



Farming has new crop of devotees



(Jim Davis/ Globe Staff)

After decades of decline, farming is resurging across Massachusetts. Above, Rachael Potts worked on her crops behind Richardson's Dairy Farm in Dracut. (Boston Globe)

- [Food bloggers feast on local produce](#)

New England's fast-growing organic food and local farm movement is also spawning consumer demand for organic lawns and landscapes.

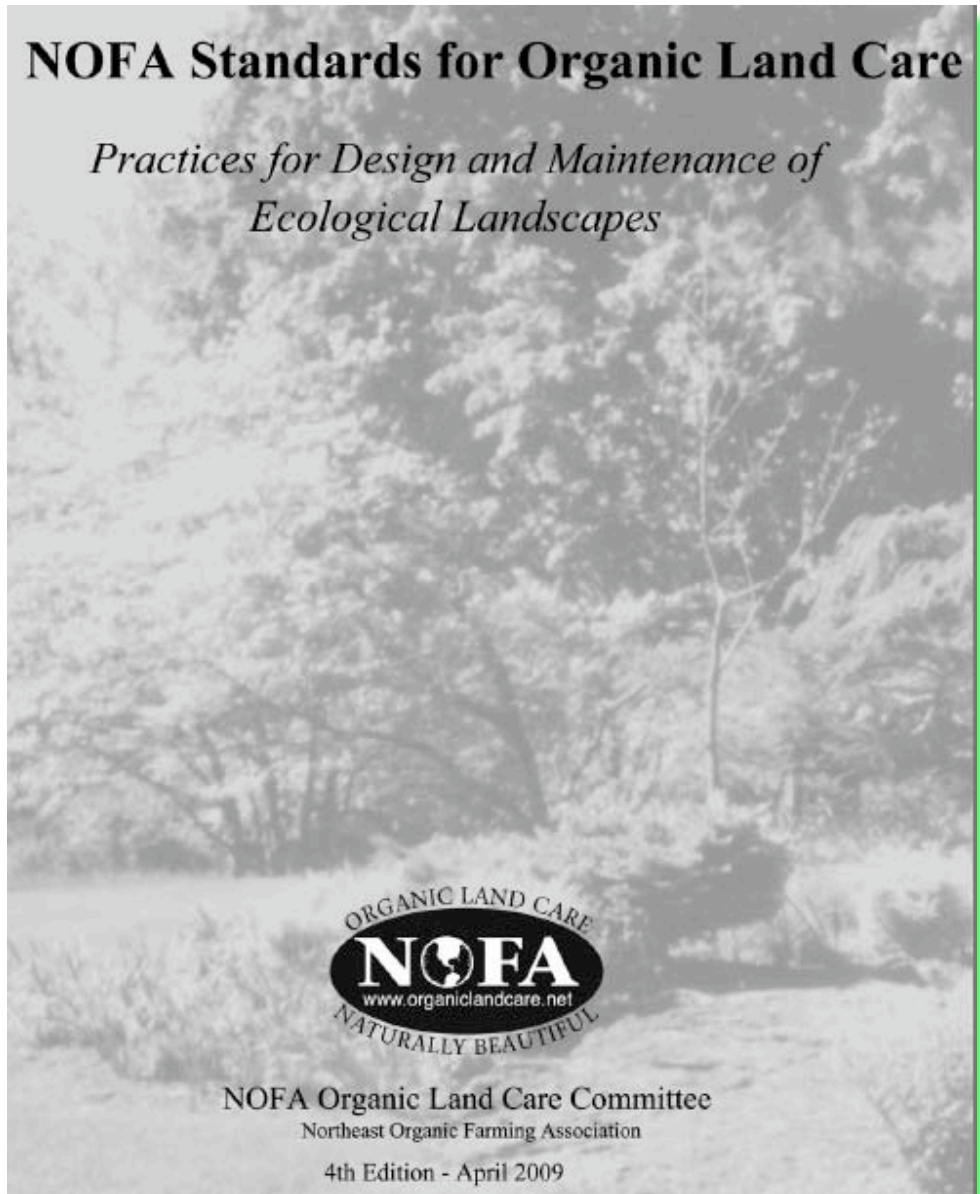
“Be Green Organic Yards Program,” New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

- Voluntary training and certification program, min. 8-hour class
- **Products and practices that *cannot* be used:**
 - **Synthetic herbicides, insecticides, insect growth regulators, fungicides, rodenticides or molluscides**
 - Products that contain synthetic synergists, inert ingredients on EPA’s List 1, Inert Ingredients of Toxicological Concern
 - Arsenical pesticides
 - Nicotine
 - Rotenon
 - Soil fumigants
 - **Seeds or plant material from genetically modified (GM) organisms**
 - **Synthetic fertilizers or fertilizers derived from sludge**
 - **Exceptions: USDA’s National Organic Program limited list of synthetic products**



OLC Core Principles:

- 1. Reject the use of all artificial and synthetic chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, and GMOs.** Only organic or natural materials may be used.
 - Soap, oil extracts, microbes, compost
 - Exception: disease risks
- 2. Build healthy soil.**
- 3. Increase plant diversity and health.**
- 4. Whole system, cultural practices approach**



NOFA Standards for Organic Land Care

4th Edition, April 2009

- Principles and procedures
- Site analysis, design and management
- Air
- **Water**
- Soil health
- Planning and plant care
- Lawn and lawn alternatives
- Appropriate plant choice
- Weeds
- Mulches
- Pest management
- Disease control
- Wildlife management
- Disposal guidelines for garden renovation projects

~ *Highlights* ~

DRAFT Revised OLC Standards for WATER
5th Ed., 2011

- **VALUES** – Conservation of water *quantity* and *quality*
- **PREFERRED** – ‘Right plant, right place’ natives and adaptives; organic soil, nutrition and pest control
- **ALLOWED** – Irrigation *as needed*, but not on a regular basis (e.g., lawns); minimization of plastics
- **PROHIBITED** – Run-off; ornamental water features; excessive rainwater storage; synthetic turf and plastic mulch

NOFA OLC Accreditation Program

NOFA Organic Land Care | A model for sustainable landscaping practices | Naturally beautiful Lawns + Landscapes

http://www.organiclandcare.net/

Organic Land Care

NOFA Naturally Beautiful Landscaping

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Swallowtail butterflies and native Joe-pye-weed photo by R Darke

NOFA Organic Land Care

Beautiful Lawns, Gardens and Landscapes

FOR PROFESSIONALS

- About Accreditation
- Credit Opportunities
- Reaccredit
- Product Lists
- The Standards (pdf)
- Soil Testing Labs
- AOLCP Search

ORGANIC FALL TULIPS - FUNDRAISER

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- Product Lists
- Ask a Question
- Why Organic?

LANDSCAPER SEARCH

Find an organic lawn, garden or landscaping professional near you:

Search

Our mission is to extend the vision, principles and expertise of organic agriculture to the landscapes where people live their daily lives. Our *Standards for Organic Land Care* has been recognized and used across the U.S. as a model for sustainable landscaping practices. In this site you can learn about our Standards, our Accreditation program for professional organic landscapers, and resources for homeowners, property managers and organizations seeking to adopt sustainable organic landscaping practices.

A regional program of CT NOFA, authorized by the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) Interstate Council, in partnerships with NOFA state chapters (MA, RI, NJ, NY, NH, VT).

Latest from the Green Room Blog

5-day Organic Land Care (OLC) Course

Day 1

Principles and Procedures - Site Analysis, Design and Maintenance - Rain Gardens/Stormwater Infiltration - Soil Health, Soil Foodweb

Day 2

Fertilizer and Soil Amendments - Composting - Lawns - Lawn Alternatives

Day 3

Planting and Plant Care - Wetlands - Pest Management - Turf Insects, Perennials, Trees and Shrubs

Day 4

Pest Management - Ticks and Lyme Disease - Wildlife Management - Disease Control - Water Management - Mulches

Day 5

Invasive Plants/Control - Client Relations - Review - Accreditation Examination



Site-adapted plantings and dry-laid stone allow rainfall to recharge local ground water – R Darke

1-day Organic Lawn & Turf Course

- How to grow organic lawns and turf that looks good and survives stress
- Why the demand for organic lawn and turf care is increasing
- Transitioning from conventional to organic management
- How to use this knowledge to profit in a rapidly expanding market
- Ways to educate and communicate with clients about organic land management methods
- Practical info from professionals

COURSE SCHEDULE

8:00-8:30	Registration, coffee
8:30-8:45	Why go Organic
8:45-9:00	What is Organic Lawn and Turf Mgmt
9:00-10:15	Soil Compaction and Aeration
10:15-10:30	Break
10:30-11:30	Insects, Weeds, Disease
11:30-12:15	Turfgrass Nutrition
12:15-1:15	Lunch (provided)
1:15-2:15	Soil Amendments and Compost
2:15-3:15	Compost tea
3:15-3:30	Break
3:30-4:15	Cultural Practices
4:15-4:30	Q & A

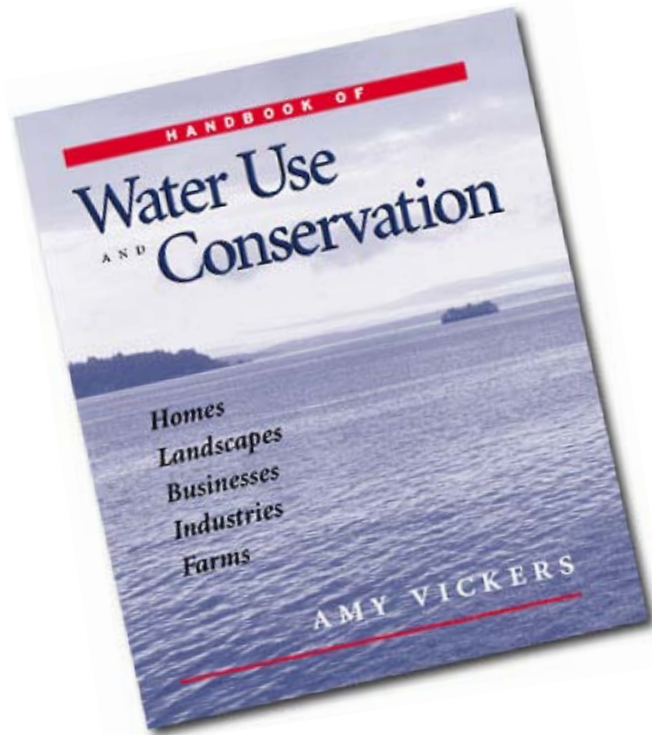
This course provides 6 Credits for NOFA Accredited Organic Land Care Professionals

NOFA OLC Accreditation Requirements

- **Take** the NOFA OLC 5-day Accreditation Course in organic landscaping
- **Pass** the Accreditation Exam
- **Pledge** to provide organic land care according to the NOFA Standards for Organic Land Care
- **Maintain** continuing education by attending a minimum of 4 credit-hours of organic landscaping education annually.
- **Pay** an annual fee (\$100) to support the work of the OLC program

Additional Information

- **NOFA Organic Land Care Course,**
<http://www.organiclandcare.net/>
- **“Be Green Organic Yards Program,”** New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC),
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/65071.html>
- **Safe Lawns Foundation,**
<http://www.safelawns.org/>



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