

# West Windsor Township

## Environmental Commission

### Lawn Options

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Traditional

Natural

Artificial

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## Pros/cons

<b><i>Component</i></b>	<b><i>Traditional</i></b>	<b><i>Natural</i></b>	<b><i>Artificial</i></b>
Water consumption	A LOT	A Little	None
Cost	\$-\$\$	\$-\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
Butterflies, Birds, Bees	No	Yes	No
Maintenance	Mow	Invasives	Clean

Items to Consider  
***Traditional Lawns***

41 Million acres of lawn in the USA.

320 Gallons of water/day/family (30% slated for outdoors uses).

9 Billion gallons/day nationwide for landscape irrigation.

Turf grass is the single largest irrigated crop in the USA.

200 million gallons of gasoline/year for lawn equipment.

11 times the pollution of a new car in one hour of lawn mower use (increased PM<sub>2.5</sub>).

70 Million pounds of pesticides applied to turf grass/year.

No habitat for pollinators, birds.

Birds may ingest berries & seeds that have been treated with pesticides.

Lawns are the largest cultivated crop in the USA (over 40 million acres / 2% of our land).

A Status Symbol.

## Items to Consider ***Natural Lawns***

Left to grow wild.

Require little grooming.

Native plants thrive in local conditions.

Edible plants.

Attracts and supports wildlife.

Offsets soil loss.

Increases soil fertility.

Weed suppression.

Reduced fossil fuel use.

Vermin populations are not increased.

Better rainwater control.

Allergen-type pollens are reduced.



## Items to Consider ***Artificial Lawns***

Expensive to install (\$6 - \$20/sq. ft.); Return on investment: 3-7 years.

Can get very hot (summer sunlight).

Low maintenance (no mowing, fertilizing, aerating or weeding).

Consistent green look.

Allergen free.

Durability.

Appearance.

Environmental advantage (no fertilizers, pesticides).

Environmental disadvantage (no biodiversity, rainwater absorption, pet waste).

Resale value (depends on quality of artificial lawn).

Regular deep cleaning (a few/year).

Installation challenge:

Site preparation; Sub-base; Turf unrolling; seam joining; perimeter secured; grooming.

Items to Consider  
***Artificial Lawns***

*What some have said:*

“hosing/soaping...in the end got rid of it”

“it caught fire”

“pesky critters”

“fake grass looks so bad”

## What others have done

North Brunswick: Premises shall be kept trimmed and kept from becoming overgrown.

Montgomery County: A nuisance is grass or weeds in excess of 12 inches tall and with 10 feet of property line.

Chatam: Remove invasives! (e.g. purple loosestrife).

State of NJ: *Tried* to exempt natural lawns from nuisance laws (2014).

Stratford, WI: Written plan for natural lawns; height not to exceed 10 inches; neighbors' consent.

Fire chief may require approval for burning.

Natural lawn = public nuisance unless a natural lawn management plan has been filed and approved.

# How should West Windsor Township Proceed?

## *Options*

Recognize traditional lawns have a negative impact on the environment.

Identify professionals who can help in converting traditional to natural.

List acceptable native plants and those that are invasive and should be avoided.

Promulgate design considerations that must be adhered to.

Height; Unobstructed roadway views; Recommended plants.

Consider incentivizing homeowners to convert to natural lawns (e.g., Cash for Conversion).

Lobby American Water to lower cost/gallon for homeowners who convert to natural.

Host annual “best in class” awards to homeowners. (Class: Environment; Visual etc.).

Discourage the installation of artificial lawns, except where warranted.

Educate our residents: Hold seminars to educate citizens; Traditional v. Natural; Environment

# How should West Windsor Township Proceed?

## ***Summary***

Does WWT wish to address this issue head-on?

WWT EC can only make recommendations.

Council should consider and recommend options to the Mayor.

Council with the Environmental Commission can generate a conversion plan.

A WWT “Quality Assurance” person would help assure adherence to the plan.

“No Parking” signs are of no consequence without patrol officers.

Communication with other communities dealing with traditional to natural will help.

Don't reinvent the wheel.