

# Is Your Yard Green?

By Toni Stahl and Marc Apfelstadt, September 13, 2007

**Abstract.** Ohio is composed of small, privately owned parcels of land and is undergoing rapidly expanding urban sprawl. Traditional yards (chemically treated lawn/garden with Invasive\* plants) negatively impact environmental health in these studies:

1. From 2001 to 2006, environmental indicators were recorded in a central-Ohio residential yard as it transitioned from traditional to sustainable (organically treated lawn/garden with native and non-Invasive plants). Healthy environmental indicators increased exponentially, indicating that the yard had become self-sustainable.
2. In 2005 and 2006, the sustainable yard and an adjacent, traditional yard were surveyed. The sustainable yard had more healthy environmental indicators than the traditional counted during similar survey periods. 2006 sustainable yard indicators showed a healthier soil food web condition, less environmental disturbance and less pollution.

In addition to sustainable actions within the home, homeowners should reduce lawn area, add diverse native plants, reduce chemical use and remove Invasive plants in order to improve Ohio environmental health. We recommend that governments promote 'green space' and update weed laws; school officials add 'sustainable yard care' to required curriculum; and plant nurseries stop selling Invasive plants and sell native plants.

\*Non-native plants that harm natural areas