



CREATING NATURESCAPES

Naturescapes are eco-friendly landscapes that provide natural beauty and wildlife habitat for birds, bees, and butterflies!

BENEFITS OF NATURESCAPES

Environmental and Health

- Provide habitat for resident and migrating wildlife
- Promote biodiversity and increase ecosystem health
- Reduce and can eliminate the need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides
- Improve air quality and human health
- Reduces:
 - Greenhouse gas emissions
 - Climate change impacts
 - Storm-water runoff pollution
 - Ground water contamination
 - Chances of disease, like cancer, due to pesticide and chemical exposure

Economic

- Reduce
 - Water bills up to 40%
 - Heating and air conditioning bills by over 15%
 - Maintenance costs by up to 50%
 - Waste management costs by over 60%
- Significantly increase property aesthetics and value

HABITAT ELEMENTS

Naturescapes provide the three key habitat elements for wildlife: food, water, shelter.

Food

- Native plants support up to 50 times as many species as non-native plants
- Plant a variety of native trees, shrubs, vines, wildflowers and groundcovers to insure year-round sources of food from berries to bugs
- Contact your local native plant society, Audubon chapter, or agriculture extension service for information on native plants for your area
- Supplement natural sources of food with feeders when needed during extreme weather like droughts

Water

- Place birdbaths and ponds to provide year-round sources of fresh water
- Locate water sources in open areas next to evergreen shrubs and trees

Shelter

- Plant native evergreen trees, shrubs and vines to provide shelter for wildlife and places for them to raise their young

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- Create brush piles in sunny areas and plant native vines to sprawl over them
- Supplement with houses for birds, bees, bats, butterflies and beneficial insects

DESIGN TIPS

- Identify natural conditions in your yard
 - Light – areas from sun to shade
 - Water – areas from dry to wet
 - Wind – areas from calm to windy

Design Activity Areas

- Create areas for recreation, children, pets, outdoor cooking and meditation
- Note utilities, overhead obstructions, property lines and easements

Link Activity Areas with Pathways

- Create curving pathways around your yard for access and maintenance
- Think of a meandering creek flowing around your yard providing intrigue and surprises waiting to be discovered around the next bend!

Right Plant, Right Place!

- Match plant requirements with natural conditions in your yard
- Plant a variety of plants to create diversity and a healthy yard
- Group same species together for visual impact
- Arrange trees, shrubs and plants in descending layers from high to low from the outside to center of your yard like a stadium
- Plant deciduous trees on the south and west sides to provide shade in summer and warmth in winter
- Place trees and shrubs to soften corners and accent architectural style
- Place colorful trees as focal points for interest
- Plant shrubs and flowers in masses of odd numbers (3, 5, 7, etc.)
- Plant for the mature size of plants and trees!
- Use planters or arbors to frame entrances and provide seasonal color and variety

SITE PREPARATION AND INSTALLATION

- Remove invasive non-native trees and plants
- Remove sod by spraying with vinegar, covering with newspaper or cardboard or using a sod remover and composting
- Install a drip or micro-spray irrigation system with automatic program and rain-sensor shutoff
- Check soil pH and adjust if necessary with compost or natural supplements
- Plant your naturescape in phases to match your budget
- To save money use a part of your yard as a nursery to raise the plants and trees
- Use sustainable natural sources of mulch
- Use edging made from recycled material
- Put up bird feeders, bird, bee and bat houses
- Place garden accessories like step stones, benches, fountains and wind chimes

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MAINTENANCE

Irrigation

- Water before dawn or after dusk
- Use soaker hoses or drip sprinklers
- Calibrate sprinkler system to apply ½ to ¾ inch of water per application
- Install an automatic rain shut-off device and set to ½ inch
- Plant beds need less water than lawn areas and can be watered separately
- Install a rain barrel under a downspout to capture rainfall for hand watering

Eco-Conscious Lawn Care

- Cut grass infrequently
- Mow higher - taller grass has deeper roots that help drive away weeds
- Use a manual or electric mower
- Use a mulching mower or compost grass clippings instead of sending to a landfill

Compost & Mulch

The average yard contains enough waste from trees, shrubs, lawns and organic garbage to provide most or all of the mulch and natural fertilizer you need.

- Create self-mulching areas under trees where leaves can remain after they fall
- Supplement with recycled or sustainable mulch
- Local power and tree companies and municipal solid waste departments are great sources of free mulch, but be sure not to use mulch from diseased trees
- Place grass clippings in your compost bin or scatter them in your plant beds
- Mulching 2-3 inches thick reduces weeds in garden beds
- Clip twigs into small pieces and leave in plant beds for nest material for birds

Natural Pest Management

For every insect, they attempt to control and destroy, pesticides kill thousands of beneficial insects, including honeybees, ladybugs and butterflies, disrupting the circle of life. Control pests with natural pest management practices instead of using pesticides.

- Prevent pests by maintaining healthy soil with compost and mulch
- Plant a diversity of plant species to increase diversity
- Immediately remove diseased plants to prevent spread of disease
- Remove dead plants, as they may provide a place for insect pests to hide
- Identify the problem, whether it is a bug, disease or weed, before taking action

CERTIFICATION

Certifying your naturescape helps educate others about the importance of creating eco-friendly landscapes and provides a growing database for science and conservation.



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Select a Certification Program

There are many local, state and national habitat certification programs by government agencies and non-profit organizations. Programs vary by focus, application, certification process and fees. Choose the program or programs that best suit your objectives, time and resources.

- [Audubon Why Native Plants Matter](#)
- [National Wildlife Federation Garden for Wildlife](#)
- [EPA Green Scaping](#)



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