



Minnesota
Office of
Environmental
Assistance

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A well-designed yard provides many benefits to the homeowner and the environment. Using native plants reduces the need for watering, fertilizing, and applying herbicides and pesticides. Landscaping with rain gardens can prevent polluting runoff and soil erosion. Planting trees in strategic locations will make your home and yard more comfortable while reducing energy bills. With some additional planning, your yard also can become an oasis for butterflies and birds.

Reduce yard maintenance with native plants

Landscaping your yard with native plants can help reduce your yard maintenance in many ways. Native plants have adapted over thousands of years to survive the weather extremes of the area. Gardening with native plants makes the best use of local soil and water conditions. Native plants need less fertilizer because they help replenish the soil with nutrients, and they are more drought-resistant and less likely to need watering. The hardiness of native plants reduces the need for herbicide and pesticide applications as well. Best of all, planting part of your yard with native plants in place of turf means less to mow.

When planning native landscaping, evaluate the soil, moisture, light and other conditions of the space to guide the choice of plants: forest plants are shade-tolerant; wetland plants grow best in moist soils; prairie plants need sunshine and soil depth for deep roots to grow.

For most landscaped yards, the best option is to balance turf areas with natural areas. Native plants do not survive well in heavily trafficked areas. Small residential yards often work best with less than half the area planted in native vegetation.

For more information about landscape design with native plants, visit the Department of Natural Resources web site, *In Your Backyard*: www.dnr.state.mn.us/backyard/.

Where can I find native plants?

When purchasing native plants, look for the label “nursery-propagated.” Check that the plants are local to your area, generally within a

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fifty-mile radius of your garden. Do not collect plants from the wild—you may destroy small remaining patches of wild native plants.

- Landscape Alternatives — 651-488-3142
1705 St. Albans St., St. Paul, MN 55113
- Outback Nursery — 651-438-2771
15280 110th St. S., Hastings, MN 55033
- Prairie Hill Wildflowers — 507-451-7791
8955 Lemond Rd., Ellendale, MN 56026
- Prairie Moon Nursery — 507-452-1362
Route 3, Box 163, Winona, MN 55987
www.prairiemoonnursery.com
- Prairie Restorations Inc. — 763-389-4342
P.O. Box 327, Princeton, MN 55371
www.prairieresto.com

For more native plant and seed suppliers, see www.dnr.state.mn.us/gardens/nativeplants/

Protect water quality with rain gardens

Landscaping your yard with one or more “rain gardens” will reduce runoff, helping protect nearby rivers and lakes. Rain gardens retain storm runoff long enough to biologically filter the water and prevent pollutants from washing into sewers and water bodies. Place them at the end of gutter downspouts, bordering patios, or near driveways and roads.

Reducing runoff has many advantages. Your yard will need less watering, and you’ll reduce soil and nutrient losses. Plants will filter some pollutants that otherwise might accumulate in the soil or wash off into sewers.

Rain gardens are constructed with layers of soil, sand and shredded hardwood mulch, with a covering of native plants that can tolerate a wide range of moisture conditions. Rainwater is “ponded” so it can filter through the vegetation and absorb more slowly. Because rain gardens completely absorb water in less than four days, insect breeding is not a problem.

For more information on rain gardens, see the Twin Cities Green Guide: www.thegreen-guide.org/gardening/index.php.

Cut energy bills by planting trees

Planting trees in strategic locations will help increase the comfort of your home and reduce energy bills. A windscreen of evergreens on the northwest side of your house will block winter winds. Locating your air conditioner on the north side of your house and shading it with a tree will keep it cool in the summer and reduce energy use. Large shade trees on the east and west sides of your house will block out summer sun and keep your house cooler.

For more information on planting strategies for energy conservation, visit the *Tree Care and Maintenance* section on the Department of Natural Resources web site: www.dnr.state.mn.us/backyard.

Attract wildlife

You can create a wildlife oasis in your own back yard. Plant native trees and shrubs that provide food such as seeds, fruits and nuts for birds, butterflies and other wildlife. A dense area of shrubbery or a stand of evergreen trees can provide cover and protection from wind and predators. Provide water for wildlife to drink and bathe in by adding a small pond or birdbath. Work with your neighbors to coordinate landscaping for shelter, food and water to support wildlife.

The National Wildlife Federation created the **Backyard Wildlife Habitat** program to acknowledge people who garden for wildlife. Over 25,000 sites have been certified as backyard habitat sites since 1973.

Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program Office
National Wildlife Federation
8925 Leesburg Pike, Vienna, VA 22184-0001
www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/

Buy sustainable landscape products

When buying things for your yard, look for sustainable products made from certified wood, recycled materials and organic ingredients. Examples include garden and soaker hoses, planters, patio furniture, landscape edging, decking, timbers and posts, compost, fertilizer, and mulch. Major local retailers, lumberyards and garden centers stock recycled and other sustainable lawn and garden products. If you do not see these products on a local store's shelves, ask the store management to carry them.

For specific recycled products and retailers, visit the Recycling Association of Minnesota's web site at www.recycleminnesota.org.

Additional resources

The **University of Minnesota Extension Service** is the university's educational outreach arm.

- **INFO-U.** Extension's free hotline with recorded messages. Call 612-624-2200 or 800-525-8636, or go online: www.extension.umn.edu/info-u/.
- The **Yard and Garden Line** offers both free information and fee-based services like personal assistance from master gardeners and soil testing. Call 612-624-4771 or toll-free 888-624-4771, or visit www.extension.umn.edu/projects/yardandgarden/.
- **Gardening and Horticulture** web site: www.extension.umn.edu/garden/.
- **Sustainable Urban Landscape Information Series** www.sustland.umn.edu

Plant Information Online is a subscription-based web site offering the largest listing of currently cultivated plants of North America, including nurseries and plant citations: <http://plantinfo.umn.edu/>.

The **Minnesota Landscape Arboretum** in Chanhassen is part of the U of M's Department of Horticultural Science. In addition to research, the arboretum also features displays, collections, model landscapes and conservation areas. Call 612-443-2460 or visit www.arboretum.umn.edu.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has many publications on native plants and water quality protection. Call the Information Center at 651-296-6157 or 888-646-6367, or www.dnr.state-mn.us/information_center/publications.html

Sustainable Resources Center's Urban Lands Program offers many resources to establish and preserve community gardens, including workshops on garden-related topics. Call 612-872-3291 or visit www.src-mn.org/SRCUrbanLandsHome.htm.

The **Minnesota Native Plant Society** (220 Biological Sciences Center, 1334 Gortner Ave. S., St. Paul, MN 55108) holds monthly meetings with guest speakers who specialize in native plant propagation, conservation and management. They also publish a quarterly newsletter and sponsor an annual symposium.

St. Paul Neighborhood Energy Consortium (651-221-4462) works with residents in St. Paul and the east Metro and provides fact sheets on landscaping with native plants. WoodWins manufactures lawn and garden furniture from reclaimed wood: www.woodwins.org.

The U.S. EPA hosts a **Green Landscaping with Native Plants** web site: www.epa.gov/greenacres/.