



Ecological Consulting

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Ecologically-minded landscaping practices

The bottom line is simply to keep things as natural as possible, while making your landscape choices look deliberate so your neighbors don't simply think your yard is "neglected". Our flora and fauna have adapted to fill pretty much any niche imaginable. Intervention is needed to manage invasive species. If we provide our native species with space, they can usually handle the rest. And when your neighbors see how fun your yard is, they might even choose to join you in your efforts. 😊

- 1. Mowing the lawn**— minimize it, both the amount of lawn and the frequency of mowing. You may need to mow the lawn that remains as you work on reducing the amount of it. The longer you can go between mowings, the better. If you can mow a portion one week and another portion the next week, that provides critters with a place to go when escaping your current mowing. What many people think are the tall "weeds" in your yard are frequently the flowering stalks of the lawn grass. You may be able to get away with simply weed-whacking the flowering stalks off the grass.
- 2. Don't spray** anything with chemicals and don't fertilize. There's typically no need to do this. These stories have been created by the chemical manufacturers so you'll buy what they're selling. If you feel the need to control mosquitos, use mosquito dunks in "buckets of doom".
- 3. Keep all your leaves and twigs**, if/when at all possible. Removing them from your property removes the nutrients in them from your ecosystem. Mammals, birds, reptiles, and bugs will all use them for food, nests, and shelter. You can rearrange them— make piles of leaves and sticks and branches. Some people use twigs and branches to make wattle fencing and borders that are "cues of care".
- 4. Don't cut off/down dead branches or trees** if there is minimal risk of their damaging property. These provide food, nests, and shelter for many species. If there is a tree that needs to be cut down, leave as tall a "stump" as is reasonable for property safety purposes. Ask the arborist to cut off the main trunk at an angle rather than straight across. Anecdotal evidence suggests this increases wildlife use.
- 5. Use non-"powered" landscaping equipment** when reasonable. The air pollution requirements on gas-powered landscaping equipment are lenient, to say the least. A gas-powered leaf blower produces up to 300x more gaseous air pollution than a Ford F-150 truck, not to mention the horrendous noise pollution. The blasts of air emitted by leaf blowers are equivalent to a Category-5 tornado (can you imagine being a small organism enduring that?!). They also resuspend into the air the pollen, mold spores, and other particulate pollution that has settled onto the ground, increasing problems for people with allergies and breathing issues.
- 6. Include woody shrubs and trees** in your landscaping plan. Today's mature trees won't be around forever, and it is important to have younger trees around to replace them when they age out. Additionally, many of our most important pollinators require tree leaves as food when they're in their juvenile stage. Many of them also lay eggs and overwinter in woody twigs and branches.
- 7. Maximize plant diversity.** Larger yards will be able to support more species but, even in small spaces, it is important to have species that flower at different times of year to maximize the availability of nectar and pollen of native plants. When possible, use "wild type" or "straight species" plants rather than cultivars. All individuals of a given cultivar are genetic clones of one another which means that there is very little potential for adaptation to our changing environment. Ensuring greater genetic combinations means healthier plants and ecosystems now and in the future.