

NATUR SCAPING

What Is Naturescaping?

- Naturescaping utilizes alternative landscaping techniques that are viable substitutes to the high water, chemical, and energy input requirements of typical landscaping.
- Naturescaping is a form of landscaping that conserves water and protects the environment.
- Naturescaping uses natural native landscapes and water-efficient practices.
- The main benefits of Naturescaping are that it protects water resources and community character, enhances wildlife habitat, promotes environmental protection, and is less expensive to maintain.
- Naturescaping is included by the US Environmental Protection Agency in its discussion of Best Management Practices recommended for meeting the requirements of its newly promulgated Stormwater Phase 2 Final Regulations.

Why Naturescape?

Naturescaping is a way of putting native plants and beneficial wildlife habitat back into our yards and our community and it is also a beautiful way to conserve water and energy, reduce pollution of water and soil, and create habitat for wildlife. Native plants are the foundation of naturescaping. The plants that evolved in our region are well adapted to our climate and naturally resistant to local pests and diseases. Once established, natives can often survive on rainwater alone. Naturescaping areas can include replacing some lawn area with a wildflower meadow; hummingbird and butterfly garden, plants and trees selected for natural beauty and/or for seeds, fruit, and nectar; and nesting boxes. The US, EPA, encourages alternative landscaping techniques such as Naturescaping in order to protect water quality.

Benefits Of Naturscaping

Naturscaping:

- Protects the town's natural heritage, local environmental health, and property values.
- Protects water quality.
- Decreases the drawdown of ground water and precious aquifers.
- Increases groundwater recharge.
- Protects against surface water stormwater runoff pollution.
- Restores and protects community character, native plants, and beneficial wildlife habitat.
- Beautifies the landscape.
- Protects the environment.
- Uses plants that evolved in our region and are well adapted to our climate and naturally resistant to local pests and diseases.
- Once established, native plants can often survive on rainwater alone.
- Includes replacing some lawn area with a wildflower meadow; hummingbird and butterfly gardens and rain gardens.
- Is a beautiful way to conserve water and energy.
- Reduces pollution of water and soil
- Plants and trees selected for seeds, fruit, and nectar.
- Utilizes rainwater harvesting and rain gardens.

How Do I Create A Naturscape?

According to the EPA, when creating a naturscape, it is important to consider four elements: water, shelter, food, and adequate space. When creating a naturscape in your yard or community, keep in mind these steps:

Visit "wild" places and naturscaped sites and imagine how these landscapes would fit in your yard or community. Observe and learn about natural plant communities or groupings. Educate yourself and your community. Learn about native plants and basic design and care concepts. You can attend workshops and read plant and design books.

When you are ready to develop a site plan, choose a small viewable site.

When planning, consider maintenance water, gardening. Know the existing conditions of the area shade/sun, wet/dry, wind patterns, drainage, existing plants, animals, and ecosystems. Once you develop a plan and you have gotten any necessary permits, you are ready to gather your material and begin.

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

ENCOURAGE NATURSCAPING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Whereas, **Naturescaping** is a beautiful way to protect community character, water quality and the environment and to conserve water and energy, reduce pollution of water and soil, and create habitat for wildlife.

Whereas, **Naturescaping** is a way of restoring and protecting the town's natural heritage by putting native plants and beneficial wildlife habitat back into our yards and our community.

Whereas, Westchester County has set an example by requiring that all county properties utilize native plants exclusively in their landscape and eliminate invasive plants.

Whereas, **Naturescaping** is included by the US Environmental Protection Agency in its discussion of Best Management Practices recommended for meeting the requirements of its newly promulgated Stormwater Phase 2 Final Regulations.

RECOMMENDATION:

Encourage your town to adopt guidelines to encourage NATURSCAPING in both new development and on existing sites.

Meet with local neighborhood groups to promote community naturescaping, host naturescaping workshops, and establish naturescaping demonstration sites in neighborhoods. Offer naturescaping assistance to residential, business, and public projects.

Basic Principles Of Naturscaping

Naturscaping incorporates seven basic principles that protect water quality and reduce water use.

1. **Planning and design.** Consider drainage, light, and soil conditions; desired maintenance level; which existing plants will remain; plant and color preferences; and budget.
2. **Appropriate plant selection.** Choose low-water-using native flowers, trees, shrubs, and groundcovers. Many of these plants need watering only in the first year.
3. **Soil improvement.** Mix soil amendments, or compost into soil before planting to help the soil retain water. Use terraces and retaining walls to reduce water run-off from sloped yards.
4. **Practical lawns.** Limit the amount of grass area. Plant groundcovers or add pervious hard surface areas like decks, patios, or gravel walkways. If replanting lawns, use drought-tolerant grass seed mixes.
5. **Efficient irrigation.** Install drip or trickle irrigation systems, as they use water efficiently. Use rain barrels, rain gardens, and rainwater harvesting. Irrigate only if the rainfall is less than one inch in the past week.
6. **Effective use of mulches.** Use a 3-inch deep layer of mulches such as pine needles or shredded leaves or bark. This keeps soil moist, prevents erosion, and smothers weeds.
7. **Appropriate maintenance.** Properly timed fertilizing, weeding, pest control, and pruning will preserve the beauty of the landscape and its water efficiency.

References:

US EPA, Office of Waste Water Management, Municipal Housekeeping, BMP's,
http://oaspub.epa.gov/npdes/menuofbmeps/poll_8.htm

Westchester County Executive Order 2001-1 On Native Plants.

Requires the exclusive use of at Native Plant materials on all county properties because they require less water, fewer chemicals, and support local ecosystems.

<http://www.seagrant.uconn.edu/CWFact7.PDF>

<http://www.seagrant.uconn.edu/CWFact5.PDF>