

Tips for Eco Landscaping

Important ideas to keep nature healthy on your property.

You can implement a number of simple and enjoyable practices on your land to create a beautiful, healthy, functional natural system that supports wildlife, birds and pollinator insects while preventing erosion and managing water flow. Carefully designed eco-landscapes resist pests and disease while creating vigorous plant growth, with little or no chemical inputs. Below are a few tips and some great resources to get you started.

Create a healthy, vigorous lawn with less chemicals: A lawn with healthy soil and no pesticides will support soil dwellers that feed birds and their offspring, and is better for children and pets.

- Manage turf without weed killers; instead do the following to suppress weeds:
- Leave clippings (mow with a mulching mower)
- Mow high: Let grass grow taller to outcompete weeds, with the blade set at 3 inches high or more.
- Fertilize young lawns with a nitrogen (10-0-0) fertilizer. Older lawns just need clippings or perhaps a top dressing of compost.
- Add perennial ryegrass or fine fescue seeds over lawn for a boost.
- Use a rain gauge to know how much to water. Lawns need just a little more than 1 inch of water per week...or let your lawn go dormant during summer drought.
- Hand pull or spot treat weeds.
- Do a soil test to find out what your yard or garden needs.
- Beneficial organisms can be added to fight pests, including nematodes, fungi, or bacteria.

Change up the grass lawn!

- Replace turf grass with low mow, no-water grasses, or spreading cover plantings (such as low fescue grasses and sedges), or even flower or vegetable gardens.
- Create a meadowscape area with beautiful native flowers and grasses
- Create a wet area garden or wet meadow in constantly moist or muddy areas.
- Allow your lawn to create its own blend of wildflowers and grass, or add other plants, such as bluets, clover or violets. Dandelions are great for bees early in the season!

Other Eco Landscaping Ideas

- ✦ Add native plants that provide food for birds, wildlife and beneficial insects. See the [Maine DACF Site \(http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides/yardscaping/plants/index.htm \)](http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides/yardscaping/plants/index.htm) for plants that can be used. Provide a wide variety of plants from herbaceous plants to trees and shrubs.
- ✦ Meadowscape former lawn areas or fields.
- ✦ Provide fresh water and areas of open soil (bare earth areas) for pollinator insects and birds.
- ✦ Provide shelter for wildlife, including areas of shrubs and trees, and other types of cover such as brush piles, rock piles and logs. You can also add constructed bird and bee houses and cover boards for reptiles and amphibians.
- ✦ Provide wildlife food such as berry and nut producing plants, winter feeders, and seed and nectar producing perennials. Make sure your soil is healthy and alive with beneficial soil organisms and organic matter.

Waldo County Soil and Water Conservation District

Tips for Eco Landscaping: Helpful Resources

Recommended Online Resources

Yardscaping We recommend the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry's website on **Yardscaping** <http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides/yardscaping/index.htm> for many helpful tips on healthy residential landscaping.

The Habitat Network <http://content.yardmap.org/> An excellent resource for implementing your eco landscape!

The Meadow Project <https://themeadowproject.com/> A resource site for meadowscaping.

The Wild Seed Project <http://wildseedproject.net/> A wonderful resource on native plants, with many excellent articles. They also sell Maine native plant seeds.

Landscape for Life <http://landscapeforlife.org/> This site offers excellent lessons on soil, water, plants and other topics, based on the Sustainable Sites Initiative. Teacher lesson modules are also available on these topics.



Waldo County Soil and Water Conservation District can help you plan for improving the health and functionality of your land. Contact us for a site visit through our Conservation Assistance Program free of charge. You can also certify your property as an Eco Landscape.

Contact us for more information. Find us on Facebook or see our website www.waldocountysoilandwater.org

Recommended books:

The Green Garden: A New England Guide to Planning, Planting and Maintaining an Eco-Friendly Habitat Garden, by Ellen Sousa. A lovely, visual guide, and perhaps the best easy to read introduction to eco-landscaping in New England.

Native Plants for your Maine Garden, by Maureen Heffernan. An excellent photographic guide to top plants for native landscaping.

Urban and Suburban Meadows: Bringing Meadows to Big and Small Spaces, by Catherine Zimmerman

Bringing Nature Home, by Douglas Tallamy. If you really want to understand how your eco landscape works and why it's important, this is your book. This very readable book has become the bible of ecological landscaping.

The Audubon Backyard Birdwatcher by Robert Burton and Stephen Kress. An informative and comprehensive guide to the world of birds in your yard—brought vividly to life by more than 1000 spectacular color photographs. Includes many excellent tips for planting for birds.

Attracting Native Pollinators: Protecting North America's Bees and Butterflies By The Xerces Society. This beautiful book contains the latest understanding about creating and managing pollinator habitat as well as a great introduction to insect pollinators. Illustrated with hundreds of color photographs and dozens of specially created illustrations.

100 Plants to Feed the Bees by the Xerces Society. A useful, simple starter guide to the best bee plants.

Gardening for Butterflies by the Xerces Society.

