

# 10 Guiding Principles for Responsible Lawn Care and Landscaping

## 1 Learn About Your Site or Yard

- Have soil tested to determine if nutrients/amendments are needed.
- Identify sensitive areas such as wildlife nesting places.
- Identify problem spots that can be improved with proper landscaping.

## 2 Choose the Right Plant for the Right Spot

- Select locally adapted species that require less water, fertilizer, pruning and pesticides.
- Choose the right plant for the right spot that meets the plant requirements for sun, water, and climate conditions.
- Avoid growing invasive plant species.

## 3 Build Healthy Soil and Use Fertilizers Responsibly

- If a fertilizer is needed, choose an organic or conventional product that best fits the needs of your plants and soil conditions.
- Always read and follow the label directions and never apply more than necessary.

## 4 Reduce Waste and Recycle Nutrients

- Leave grass clippings in place to provide nitrogen to the lawn.
- Make compost that can be used as a natural fertilizer and can add organic matter, microbes and earthworms to the soil.

## 5 Attract and Protect Wildlife

- Choose plants that can provide food and shelter for birds and other wildlife.
- Consider a backyard pond to provide water for wildlife.
- Add flowering annuals and perennials that can attract birds, butterflies and bees which are important pollinators.

## 6 Manage Yard Pests Responsibly

- Correctly identify any pests and the type of problems they may create.
- Change conditions that invite pest problems such as over watering, improper mowing, etc. If problems persist, choose an organic or conventional product that best fits your situation; spot treat for problems and don't use a weed and feed lawn product unless your problem is widespread.
- Always read and follow label directions.

## 7 Use Water Wisely

- Choose plants that are locally adapted or drought tolerant.
- Irrigate lawns infrequently but deeply to the depth of the root zone.
- Make sure irrigation systems are adjusted properly and repair any leaks.
- Consider drip systems to gardens, shrubs and trees.

## 8 Mow and Prune Responsibly

- Cut your lawn at the highest recommended mower setting leaving it about 3 inches long for lawns in the north and 1–2 inches in the south.
- Keep mower tuned up and blades sharp.
- Prune properly to retain a tree, shrub or plant's natural form and reduce dead or diseased material.

## 9 Prevent Landscape Pollution

- Prevent fertilizers, pesticides, yard debris or pet waste from entering water sources or waste water systems.
- Use pesticides and fertilizers only when and where needed.
- Dispose of oils, paints and other toxic materials in the proper community waste management system and not down storm drains.

## 10 Reduce Storm Water Runoff

- Slow the rate of runoff and increase soil permeability by adding organic mulch to soil and landscape plantings to intercept runoff.
- Minimize soil erosion by designing the landscape to spread water flow across the ground surface.
- Set mower height high to help prevent storm water runoff.

With the growing interest in gardening and home landscaping, business, environmental, academic and governmental organizations have joined together in a public education effort known as the *Lawns & the Environment Initiative (L&E)*. The mission of L&E is to educate and encourage the public to adopt responsible lawn care and landscaping practices.

The **10 Guiding Principles** at left are the basis for our collective education efforts including the L&E booklet *Environmental Guidelines for Responsible Lawn Care and Landscaping* that contains many examples and tips on how to implement the principles.

These ten principles form a common outreach framework and guiding philosophy for L&E members in the lawn and garden industry, environmental community, universities, and government agencies. The following organizations support the principles and will work to implement them in their organizational activities and encourage the public to adopt them in their home landscapes:

Agronomy & Horticulture Services, LLC  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System  
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay  
American Nursery and Landscape Association  
Auburn University Department of Horticulture & Master Gardeners  
Auburn University Plant Diagnostic Lab  
Audubon International  
Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association  
Center for Resource Management  
DC Cooperative Extension Service/Master Gardener Program  
Environmental Education Program Consultants  
Michigan Turfgrass Foundation  
Milorganite  
Ohio State University  
Professional Landcare Network  
Project EverGreen  
Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment  
Rutgers University Cooperative Research Extension of Middlesex County  
San Antonio Water System  
The National Arbor Day Foundation  
The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company  
The Toro Company  
TruGreen Companies  
University of Florida Environmental Horticulture Department  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Pesticides Programs

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