

10 Tips for an Environmentally Friendly Yard

1. Go Green with your Lawn

A super-green, lush carpet of grass that's the envy of your neighbors can cause big water quality problems. Because fertilizers and pesticides applied in excess are washed to rivers, streams, and wetlands, limiting their use can make a big difference. Even better, convert manicured lawn to natural meadow, beds of native perennials, and shrubs, or forest.

Kill Insects with Kindness

Or at least keep them away with natural deterrents. A list of non-chemical, natural insect repellants is available at: www.eartheasy.com/live_natpest_control.htm

Fight Weed with Eco-Friendly Herbicides

Try Deadeye (a vinegar-based formula) and WOW nitrogen fertilizer made from corn gluten. Pour boiling water or white vinegar on smaller weeds, like ones in walkway cracks.

Go Native

When landscaping your property, use native species (plants indigenous to Massachusetts) whenever possible. They require less water than grass does, because they have deeper roots and can store more water. Growing native plants can save more than half the water normally used to care for outdoor plants, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council. Also, many of these species provide food and cover for local wildlife, providing a sanctuary from suburban sprawl. For more information, see: www.greenscapes.org and www.grownativemass.org.



2. Don't let those creatures go (info about invasive animals and plants)

Although exotic animals can be great pets and ornamental plants can make beautiful decorations, many of these species are invasive. In fact, some of the characteristics that make these species desirable, like hardiness and rapid growth, are the same characteristics that allow them to out-compete native plants and animals in the wild. So never release aquarium pets or bait into the water. Also, use native plants and animals in water gardens, since predators like the great blue heron often carry water – garden residents to neighboring habitats.

3. Plant a Rain Garden

Locate it in a natural low spot where it can intercept runoff from hard surfaces such as streets, driveways and walkways. Keep it at least 15 feet away from building foundations. For more information, check out: <http://www.raingardennetwork.com>.

3. Compost Yard Waste

A lot of people think that because grass clippings, brush, and other yard waste are 'natural', it is ok to dump huge piles in the woods or wetlands. However, dumped yard waste destroys the underlying vegetation and wildlife habitat; and prohibits new trees and shrubs from growing. Leaf dumping near water bodies has resulted in flooding problems upstream. Roadside ditches, used to remove road run off, can get clogged from leaves dumped there by residents and landscapers. Weston residents may bring their yard waste including grass, leaves, and brush to the Transfer Station off of Church Street during normal business hours.

The Composting Facility (Brush Dump) on Merriam Street is open on select dates. Check the schedule here: <https://www.weston.org/305/Transfer-Station-Information>

5. Scoop the Poop

It's a dirty job, but if you don't do it, you're directly contributing to local water quality problems. Pet waste contains parasites that can cause human (and pet) health problems and be harmful to our wetlands and streams. Please pick up after your pet and never throw pet waste into a storm drain or waterway. Become a Volunteer Bark Ranger for the Town of Weston. More information can be found here: <https://www.weston.org/1346/Volunteer-Bark-Ranger>



6. Don't be a Drip

Oil, gasoline, and antifreeze from cars, trucks, lawnmowers, and boats are highly toxic to wildlife. If you notice a leak, fix it immediately to keep these toxins from polluting our waterways.

7. Drain Swimming Pools wisely

Never drain pool or hot tub water directly into a body of water. The best option is to discharge chlorinated water over landscaping using the following steps: (1) shut off the chlorination system or stop adding chlorine one week before draining pool water; (2) make sure the pH level is between 6.5 and 8.5, the normal pH range of surface and ground waters; and (3) Drain pool water where it will not flow directly into a street, gutter, someone else's property or a wetland.

8. Dead Wood is Good Wood

Deadwood is an essential component of forests and wetlands. In addition to providing habitat for a myriad of organisms, deadwood is critical to the health of the forest. Forest health revolves around decomposing wood and leaves. Whether a standing oak this is riddled with woodpecker holes or a fallen willow that has created a snag in a small brook, deadwood fosters forest life. Think twice before you "clean up" or clear out your forest.

9. Wetlands are Wonderful

Wetlands are valuable because they reduce flooding, provide wildlife habitat, help recharge aquifers, and filter polluted water. Wetlands may not be wet all the time. Low areas that flood in the spring may be wetlands. All kinds of wetlands are protected by the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. Over 25% of Weston falls under wetland regulations (so your property may, too). Always contact your Conservation Commission before you consider working near wetlands and waterways (781-786-5068).



10. Protect Wetlands with Planting a Natural Pollution Barrier Around Them.

If you live on the banks of a stream or adjacent to a wetland, a vegetative buffer is particularly important to prevent runoff from going directly into these waters. Protecting water bodies with native vegetated buffer zones will help maintain water quality, recreational resources, wildlife habitat, and property value. Check out this Guide to creating a beautiful Backyard Buffer: <https://highstead.net/pdfs/Riparian-Buffer-System.pdf>