

Green Lawns

Promoting environmental stewardship

Eco-Scorecard

DO YOU . . .

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Keep your yard safe, clean, and well maintained? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Water your lawn and plants only when they need it? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Read and follow pesticide and fertilizer labels carefully? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. Leave grass clippings in place on your lawn? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. Keep fertilizers and pesticides out of water sources? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. Use the right plants for your climate and soil conditions? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. Apply mulch around trees, shrubs and gardens? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. Cut your lawn at the highest recommended mower setting? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 9. Correctly identify insect and weed problems? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 10. Compost grass clippings, leaves and other organic material? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 11. Learn how to care for your lawn, plants, soil, and wildlife? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 12. Use well-adapted or native plants in your landscaping? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Questions that you answered “no” indicate areas where you might need to improve how you take care of your lawn or garden to become more eco-friendly.

1. Keep your yard safe, clean, and well maintained?

About two-thirds of households with a yard feel it is important add beauty to their home and neighborhood by maintaining their lawn.

2. Water your lawn and plants only when they need it?

Watering wisely is also foremost on the minds of yard and garden owners, as 65% of them claim to water only as needed. It is important to irrigate lawns infrequently, but deeply, to the depth of the root zone. You might also consider adding a drip system to gardens, shrubs, and trees.

3. Read and follow pesticide and fertilizer labels carefully?

Just over half of people with yards and gardens are careful to follow the directions on fertilizers and pesticides. It is important to never apply more than necessary and only where it is actually needed.

4. Leave grass clippings in place on your lawn?

It is important to reduce waste and recycle nutrients whenever possible. Leaving grass clippings in place provides nitrogen to the lawn.

5. Keep fertilizers and pesticides out of water sources?

Unfortunately, less than half of yard and garden owners seem to understand that they play an important role in reducing landscape pollution. It is important to prevent fertilizers, pesticides, yard debris, and pet waste from entering water sources or wastewater systems.

6. Use the right plants for your climate and soil conditions?

Choose the right plant for the right spot that meets the plant’s requirements for sun, water, and climate conditions. Locally adapted species will require less water, fertilizer, pruning, and pesticides. Only 42% of yard and garden owners bear this in mind when planning their landscapes.

7. Apply mulch around trees, shrubs and gardens?

Organic mulch will slow the rate of water runoff and increase soil permeability. You can also minimize soil erosion by designing your landscape to spread water flow across the ground surface.

8. Cut your lawn at the highest recommended mower setting?

Another way to prevent storm water runoff is to keep the mower setting high. It should be about 3 inches for lawns in the north and 1-2 inches in the south.

9. Correctly identify insect and weed problems?

Only about a third of yard and garden owners take the time or trouble to correctly identify the insect or weed problems they're having. After identifying a specific problem, the first line of defense is to change the conditions that invite pest problems, such as over watering, improper mowing, etc. If the problems persist, choose an organic or conventional product that best addresses your particular situation; spot treat for problems and don't use a weed and feed lawn product unless your problem is widespread. And always read and follow label directions.

10. Compost grass clippings, leaves and other organic material?

Composting reduces waste and recycles nutrients. Make compost that can be used as a natural fertilizer and can add organic matter, micro-nutrients, microbes, and earthworms to the soil. Sadly, less than a third of yard and garden owners say they compost.

11. Learn how to care for your lawn, plants, soil, and wildlife?

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

12. Use well-adapted or native plants in your landscaping?

Avoid growing invasive plant species. Locally adapted plants require less water, fertilizer, pruning, and pesticides. Choose plants that can provide food and shelter for birds and other wildlife. Add flowering annuals and perennials that can attract birds, butterflies, and bees, which are important pollinators. Only a quarter of yard and garden owners say they are careful to choose well-adapted plants.

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For more information about environmentally friendly lawn care management, locate your local Extension office at

www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension

To view this publication electronically, visit

www.growinggreenlawns.org

This document was adapted from the *Environmental Guidelines for Responsible Lawn Care and Landscaping* as developed by the members of the Lawns and Environment Initiative (L&E). To learn more about the development of the *Environmental Guidelines for Responsible Lawn Care and Landscaping* and the L&E Initiative go to

www.lawnsandenvironment.org.

Statistics cited in this document are results from the 2004 Environmental Lawn and Garden Survey conducted by Harris Interactive for the National Gardening Association.

