

## Take Action in Your Yard & Garden

- Plant trees, which absorb carbon from the air. According to the Arbor Day Foundation, in one year a mature tree will absorb more than 48 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and release oxygen in exchange. Some good options: Amalanchier, oaks, birches, elms, fruit trees.
- Shrink your lawn and grow more native plants. According to Heidi Ricci of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, monocultural lawn is really an ecological desert. (Read the *Boston Globe* article, 'The Argument for Killing Your Lawn' on our website.) Instead we should plant pollinator and vegetable gardens which provide a food source for humans and wildlife. Native plants also require less watering.

Replace turf with native ground covers like Appalachian and Pennsylvania sedge, woodland phlox, wild strawberries and creeping thyme.

Be generous with your plantings. Local horticulturist Gaele McCully recommends these pollinator-friendly plants which do well in Marblehead:

- PERENNIALS: Astilbe, Baptisia, Bee Balm, Catmint, Delphinium, Echinacea, Echinops, Eryngium, Joe-Pye Weed, Lavender, Milkweed, New England Aster, Phlox, Salvia, Sedum, Sweet Woodruff
- SHRUBS: Aronia, Butterfly Bush, Buttonbush, Caryopteris, Clethra, Fothergilla, Ilex Verticillata, Itea, Russian Sage, Blueberries, Raspberries
- ANNUALS: Alyssum, Borage, Cleome, Cosmos, Lantana, Verbena, Zinnia
- HERBS: Basil, Oregano, Rosemary

For more ideas, enter your zip code into the National Wildlife Federation's native plant finder.

- Treasure tree litter. According to Douglas Tallamy, author of *Nature's Best Hope, A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard*, we should

replace the lawn under trees with well planted beds since many caterpillars drop to the ground to pupate. Leaves that fall in the autumn may harbor small caterpillars and whenever possible we should use leaf litter instead of store bought mulch.

- Return plant pots to your garden center for reuse since they are not recyclable.
- Consider these more earth-friendly lawn care practices, if you are not yet ready to shrink your lawn:
  - Test your soil. The pH of your soil should be between 6.5-7.0. If your pH is too low, you need to add lime, which preserves soil nutrients.
  - Dress your soil and select the proper type of grass seed. Grass grows best with 6" of topsoil. Grass blends containing mostly fine fescues or tall fescues mixed with some perennial ryegrass are best.
  - Use organic lawn care products and fertilizers and avoid Roundup and other herbicides. Read our [fact sheet](#) on organic lawn care.
  - Only use as much fertilizer as you need for the size of your lawn. After applying fertilizer, sweep your walks and driveways to prevent the fertilizer from running off after watering or rain. Fertilize once in the spring when the ground is soft using slow release or organic fertilizer and again in early fall.
  - Keep your lawn mower set at its highest cutting height. Never cut more than 1/3 of the shoot growth at one mowing and leave the clippings on the lawn. Clippings add a natural slow acting source of nitrogen to your lawn.
  - If you find weeds, pull them out by hand. If weeds are a severe problem, spot treat them with an organic spray.
  - Proper watering is essential. Your lawn requires only one inch of water per week. One early morning watering is best.