

Is Your Landscaping Harming the Planet?

wakeup-world.com/2021/09/24/is-your-landscaping-harming-the-planet/

September 23, 2021

September 24th, 2021

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Developing an aesthetically appealing landscape is a benefit of owning a home. Unlike with rental properties, homeowners have the power to make their gardening visions come to life. While some residents take pride in the sustainability of their properties, others are unaware of their landscaping's effect on ecological conservation.



How Does Landscaping Impact Environmental Conservation?

Most individuals design walkways and large driveways on their property, helping them access certain parts of their homes. They plant shrubs and other vegetation around the paths, increasing their aesthetic appeal. When rainwater or snowmelt travel over a resident's landscape, it searches for the quickest route out.

Stone-covered pathways attract water, transporting it off of and away from a property. As it moves toward the street or a drain grate, it limits the number of resources available to the local vegetation. Inadequate irrigation techniques increase purified water's exploitation.

Runoff also creates environmental degradation deriving from synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. When the nitrogen and phosphorus-rich additives reach the ocean, they create algal blooms. As algae develop, they deplete marine oxygen levels, producing dead zones.

The uninhabitable regions force fish and other aquatic species out of their home, leaving them vulnerable without food or protection. Runoff increases the number of endangered marine species. Inefficient landscaping methods also deplete soil nutrients, altering Earth's composition.

When individuals place exotic plants on their properties, they increase their risk of soil depletion. If a plant is incompatible with a soil's properties, it can over-extract nutrients and moisture, creating erosion. When depletion occurs, the soil becomes unable to support the local ecosystem.

Ecologically Degrading Habits

Many homeowners compensate for climate change-related soil erosion and nutrient depletion by using synthetic fertilizers and other additives. Roundup is a commonly used herbicide, using glyphosate to kill invasive and native plant matter. While the active ingredients effectively remove weeds from an individual's yard, they also harm the local ecosystem.

U.S. homeowners use nearly 287 million pounds of this type of herbicide each year. When sprayed, particles pollute the air, affecting livestock, wild animals, and community members. Researchers found that cows exposed to glyphosate experience malnourishment, congenital disabilities, death, and more.

Another common environmentally degrading landscape practice relates to inefficient watering. The average homeowner wastes nearly 50% of their outdoor water supply through poor timing. When individuals run their sprinklers in the middle of the day or after rainstorms, they contribute to water exploitation.

Planting water-intensive species in arid climates also decreases a landscape's sustainability. For example, most American lawns contain grass that is not naturally occurring in that particular region. Homeowners may overwater the plant matter to maintain its vitality, which wouldn't be the case with native grasses.

Fossil fuel-powered lawn care implements also cause ecological degradation. Most lawn mowers run on gasoline. During combustion, the substance produces greenhouse gas emissions, altering Earth's temperature control process. The atmosphere relies on the consistency of its components, creating life-sustaining surface temperatures and preserving the global ecosystem.

Naturally, the atmosphere creates heat from sunlight, warms the surface, absorbs excess energy, and sends unnecessary heat to space. When greenhouse gas emissions invade the environment, they trap extra energy in the atmosphere, raising the global temperature over time.

Atmospheric degradation powers a ripple effect of environmental harm, impacting natural resource conservation and more. Homeowners can engage in alternative landscaping methods, increasing the sustainability of their properties and shrinking their carbon footprints.

Sustainable Solutions

Instead of using conventional herbicides and pesticides, individuals can plant certain species that naturally target unwanted lawn features. Mice can feed on plant matter, destroying a landscape's aesthetic value. Homeowners may keep them away from their property by planting peppermint around the perimeter.

Aphids, or plant lice, also create adverse effects on vegetation. Individuals can plant chives or marigolds near vulnerable regions of their landscapes to keep the insects away. They can also wrap foil around the base of a plant's stalk, reflecting light onto the backside of leaves and scaring the aphids.

A homeowner can also increase the sustainability of their property by decreasing water exploitation with smart sprinklers. These systems access real-time weather readings using a Wi-Fi connection, altering their watering times. They can also evaluate the ultra-violet index, limiting water loss from high evaporation rates.

Another way to reduce water exploitation is by planting native species. Indigenous vegetation is compatible with local soil nutrient levels and weather patterns. Homeowners can let the rain water their native plants rather than relying on the clean water supply.

Individuals can also embrace the natural growth patterns of native plant matter. Instead of cutting back vines and forcing downward growth, they may engage in vertical gardening. Ivy and honeysuckle-covered buildings create a unique aesthetic and lower indoor temperatures, reducing air conditioning emissions.

Homeowners can also increase the sustainability of their landscapes using electric lawn care appliances. Since eco-consciousness swept through the nation, electric leaf blowers, lawnmowers, weed whackers, and more hit the market. These appliances create zero emissions when in use, reducing atmospheric degradation.

Evaluating Your Lawn's Sustainability

If you are ready to adopt alternative green landscaping practices, you may start by calculating your lawn's environmental impacts. You can research the ecological effects of your herbicides and pesticides, determining what products you may continue using. Additionally, you calculate the carbon footprint of your lawn care devices and swap high-emission ones with electric versions.

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Jane is the founder and editor-in-chief of [Environment.co](https://www.environment.co) where she shares practical tips on how to live a greener life.

