

Landscape Sustainability Checkup

*Is your yard ready to be an
 “Oregon Sustainable Landscape”?*



To be certified by OSU Extension, your yard must:

- Score at least 50 on the following checklist
- Comply with all existing codes and laws

*** Receive partial credit for practices marked with 1 asterisk ***

Check your answers below and total your points.

Water Efficiently (Subtotal: _____)

- 4 * Design a waterwise landscape that does not need water after plants become established. These landscapes often use native plants.
- 2 Group plants in the landscape by irrigation need.
- 2 Mow lawns at proper height for attractive turf, encouraging a deeper and more drought tolerant root system. Bentgrass 1”, Perennial rye 2”, fescue 2” .
- 2 Calibrate sprinkler system to apply about ¾” to 1” of water with each application.
- 2 In Western Oregon do not apply water with sprinklers more than twice a week in July-August-September.
- 2 Having a rain gauge where you water will help you track irrigation amounts.
- 2 Do not start in ground irrigation systems too early in spring and shut off in fall.
- 2 Use drip or micro-sprinkler systems where practical.

Mulch (Subtotal: _____)

- 2 * Maintain a 2-3” layer of organic mulch over tree roots, around shrubs, and over plant beds, while leaving a 2” space between plant stems or trunks & the mulch.
- 1 Create self mulching areas under trees and shrubs where leaves can remain.
- 1 Use by-product mulches like fir bark or recycled mulches.
- 1 Replenish mulches at least once a year to maintain the 2-3” depth.

Recycle (Subtotal: _____)

- 2 Recycle grass clippings by leaving them on the lawn. Use a mulching mower.
- 2 Use your leaves or conifer needles as mulch.
- 2 Create and maintain a compost pile with yard trimmings, leaves, kitchen scraps.
- 2 Don’t burn yard waste. Recycle organic material into mulch or compost.

Wildlife (Subtotal: _____)

- 3 Plant vines, shrubs, and trees to provide cover, nesting sites and food for birds, pollinators and other wildlife.
- 1 Provide a water source such as a birdbath or a small pond for wildlife.
- 1 Provide wildlife shelters such as a bat house, bird house, or brush pile.
- 2 Identify five kinds of wildlife (birds, reptiles, insects) that live in your yard.

Yard Pests (Subtotal: _____)

- 2 Learn to identify 5 beneficial insects that provide natural control of harmful pests.
- 2 Check your landscape weekly for signs of problems.
- 3 Know primary pests for your plants and when to target these pests. Avoid indiscriminate spraying.
- 3 Use non-chemical approaches to pest control, such as pruning to open plants, hand removing insects, sanitation and planting disease resistant plant selections.
- 2 If necessary, use environmentally friendly pesticides such as insecticidal soaps and horticultural oils as your first choice.
- 2 Store pesticides in a water tight container away from kids. Never leave sprayers with pesticides still in them. Always read the label.

Right Plant-Right Place (Subtotal: _____)

- 2 Ensure the landscape does not contain plants identified by legal code as invasive. (English Ivy, Butterflybush)
- 2 Replace problem prone plants with low maintenance natives or non-natives.
- 2 Create landscapes that are drought tolerant on the perimeter and more moisture loving near your activity areas of the home.

..... Continue with more questions on the back ... ➔

Continue to check your answers below and total your points.

- 3 Determine how much lawn you need for pets, children, and recreation. Let the other turf areas dry out in summer.
- 1 Use trees and shrubs to shade the east and west walls of your home.
- 1 Use deciduous trees on south and west exposures to shade your home in summer and allow solar heating in winter.
- 2 Reduce yard waste by using plants that don't require frequent pruning at maturity
- 3 Preserve native trees when building on a new site. Maintain an undisturbed area under the tree out to at least the drip line.

Fertilizing (Subtotal: _____)

- 2 * Create healthy soil with composts and minerals to promote hardier plants.
- 2 * Fertilize to maintain healthy plants; do not promote excessive growth that attracts insects.
- 2 * Use natural organic or other slow release fertilizers. Check soil pH for nutrient efficiency.

Stormwater runoff (Subtotal: _____)

- 3 * Direct downspouts and gutters to drain onto the lawn, plant beds, or containment areas away from foundations.
- 2 * Use groundcovers or mulch on thinly vegetated areas to decrease erosion.

- 2 Use porous surfaces for walkways, patios and driveways.
- 2 Collect and use rainwater to irrigate plants.
- 3 Create swales and terraces to catch or filter rainfall.
- 1 Pick up after pets to reduce bacterial and nutrient pollution in storm drain systems.
- 2 Clean up oil spills and leaks with cat litter.
- 2 Sweep grass clippings, fertilizer, and soil from driveways onto the lawn. Remove yard waste from street gutters.

Stream side (Subtotal: _____)

- 2 Remove invasive exotic plants in riparian areas.
- 3* Establish or maintain a border of low maintenance native plants between your lawn and the stream side to absorb nutrients and hold the soil during times of high water.
- 2 Establish a 30 to 60 foot "no fertilizer zone" along your riparian area.
- 2 Know what pesticides are toxic to fish and should not be used near riparian areas.

Total Score: _____
(100 points possible)



If your landscape check-up totaled 50 points or more, contact the OSU Extension Horticulture Agent for an official certification. Call (541) 672-4461.

If you'd like to learn more about these topics, check out the list below of publications available at your OSU Extension Service office and on the web at: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/>

Bring your questions to your OSU Extension Service Office. We are here to help you learn about Landscape Sustainability and so much more!

For more information about Sustainable Landscape topics, see:



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Office hours:
Monday thru Friday
8:00 am to 5:00 pm

- ★ EC 1533 Basic Design Concepts for Sustainable Landscapes
- ★ EC 1535 Hardscapes for Sustainable Landscapes: Patios, Decks, Walkways, and Driveways
- ★ EC 1561 Improving Garden Soils with Organic Matter
- ★ EC 1534 Plant Selection for Sustainable Landscapes
- ★ EC 1531 Conserving Water in the Garden: Landscape and Lawn Care
- ★ EC 1577 Gardening with Oregon Native Plants West of the Cascades
- ★ EC 1521 Maintaining a Healthy Lawn in Western Oregon
- ★ EC 1440 Deer-Resistant Ornamental Plants
- ★ EC 1438 Selecting, Planting, and Caring for a New Tree
- ★ EC 1505 Southwestern Oregon Tree Selection Guide for Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, and Josephine Counties
- ★ PNW 590 Fire-resistant Plants for Home Landscapes: Selecting Plants That May Reduce Your Risk from Wildfire
- ★ EC 1541 The Wildlife Garden: Attract Hummingbirds to Your Garden
- ★ EC 1532 Gardening with Fewer Pesticides: Using Integrated Pest Management
- ★ PNW 550 Encouraging Beneficial Insects in Your Garden
- ★ EM 8742 Sustainable Gardening: The Oregon-Washington Master Gardener Handbook