

zero|waste

L a n d s c a p i n g



ZERO WASTE LANDSCAPING

Sustainable yards and gardens save time, money and help the environment

When it comes to outdoor pastimes in Canada gardening tops the list. And with its temperate maritime climate the Regional District of Nanaimo and its member municipalities of Nanaimo, Lantzville, Parksville and Qualicum Beach are horticultural hotbeds. But accompanying gardening's increasing popularity is the growing movement towards creating simpler, more naturalistic and sustainable yards and gardens.

Even with existing restrictions, during the driest 21/2 months in the summer over half of our drinking water supply is applied to lawns and gardens. With the region's growing population and the high cost of adding new infrastructure, water is a resource we simply can't afford to waste. Add in the increasing costs of managing lawn and garden waste, the harmful effects of pesticides and herbicides, and the energy and climate impacts of gas powered mowers and it's easy to see why the Zero Waste approach to landscaping is gaining ground.

THE BENEFITS OF ZERO WASTE LANDSCAPING

Zero Waste landscaping recognizes the limits of our water, energy and other resources and minimizes the impact on the natural environment that sustains us. Here are just some of the benefits and savings:

- o Greatly reduced water consumption.
- o Easily maintained, more enjoyable yards and gardens.
- o Less plant and lawn wastes to be composted or managed.
- o Elimination or reduced use of herbicides, pesticides and synthetic fertilizers.
- o Lower energy use and climate change impacts.
- o Enhanced biodiversity and increased property values.

How you can start making a difference

As the experts inside this newsletter show, you can easily put into practice principles that will conserve resources, reduce pollution and generate less waste, and still have a very attractive yard and garden. Here are some places to start:

- o Get to know your garden site, its soil types, and appropriate plant locations.
- o Convert lawns to low water, low maintenance mixed border plantings.

- o Introduce native and other drought-tolerant perennials, shrubs and trees.
- o Build your soil organically and mulch to save water and eliminate pesticides and herbicides.
- o Compost your yard and other organic wastes.

Surprising statistics

- o Canadians spent \$1.6 billion on lawns in 2004; double the amount spent four years earlier.
- o Canadians use 50 million kilograms of herbicides, insecticides and fungicides every year.
- o A lawn sprinkler spraying 19 litres per minute uses 50 per cent more water in one hour than 10 toilet flushes.
- o An average lawn produces four tonnes of clippings in just one summer.
- o Mowing a lawn with a 3-1/2 hp gasoline powered lawn mower produces as much exhaust as a full size car driven 560 kilometers.



CREATING A SUSTAINABLE LOW MAINTENANCE YARD AND GARDEN

Imagine relaxing in a yard and garden that reflects the natural beauty of our local forests, meadows, and wetlands. Imagine a landscape that extends your living space outdoors, enhances the value of your home and property, conserves water, generates minimal waste, doesn't require pesticides, herbicides or synthetic fertilizers, and is low maintenance to boot.

Sound too good to be true? Not so, says Jamie Wallace. Since starting Lantzville-based Carey's Garden Designs Ltd. with his wife and partner Angela, they've received national and provincial recognition for their naturalistic landscape designs and installations on both large acreage estates and smaller urban spaces throughout the region. A gallery of their award winning work can be viewed at www.careys.ca

"As a design-build company we're geared to creating sustainable low-maintenance landscapes for all our projects," says Jamie. "But just because they're sustainable and low-maintenance doesn't mean they can't be very attractive."

Start from the ground up

Creating a sustainable low-maintenance garden begins with a good foundation. "We like to see 12 to 18 inches of soil depth in a garden and 6 to 12 inches in a lawn," Jamie says. A common mistake is compensating for poor soils by adding synthetic fertilizers and using herbicides and pesticides.

By cultivating healthy soil, selecting the right plants and irrigating appropriately you can create a yard and garden that naturally resists pests, diseases and weeds, eliminating the need for synthetic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides.

Design with nature in mind

Carey's Garden Designs base their landscape designs on naturalistic settings such as those at the edge of a forest, which usually include tree, shrub and perennial layers. This use of multiple layers or mixed borders combined with the use of organic material is critical to achieving a sustainable, low maintenance, low waste garden.



Angela and Jamie Wallace and one of their sustainable, low-maintenance garden designs.



"The mixed layers mean that less watering is required," Jamie explains. "It's like series of umbrellas with the tree shading the plants below it, and the lower layers shading the roots of the next level. It's a beneficial environment for all, with the added benefit of providing very little space for weeds to start."

A big reduction in garden and yard waste is a key advantage of designing gardens with mixed borders. The trees and shrubs require little pruning, and any waste generated is just spent growth from the previous year's perennials that can easily be composted or disposed of responsibly.

Plan first and plant appropriately

Research what will do well in your soil before you plant. Consider the space, soil, sun and shade conditions of the area that you want to improve and base your purchases on that.

Introducing more herbaceous perennials will save money and reduce your garden's watering and maintenance needs. Jamie uses native plants in his garden designs but his naturalistic approach harmoniously incorporates non-native species while still supporting all of the native organisms such as bird and insect life.

Mulching matters

Mulching plays a key role in conserving water, preventing weeds and building soil health. Jamie recommends applying an inch to an inch and a half of fish compost to your garden every year.

Water wisely

Appropriate irrigation is fundamental to ensuring healthy plant growth and conserving water. Use a measuring device when watering lawns. With the right soil depth, one inch of water a week is all that's needed. In July and August, when the weather gets hot and dry, it's good practice to let lawns go dormant.

Consider converting your turf

The less lawn you have the less water you're going to consume. A lawn provides quiet green spaces that set off plantings. But turf is one of the hardest crops to grow well and requires two to three times the water of a sustainable mixed landscape.

"If we saw better use of perennials, more application of organic matter and less lawn, the whole region would look better. Imagine if everybody used 20 per cent less water and eliminated pesticides and herbicides. Anyone can easily achieve this and still have a very attractive yard and garden."

do your plants drink too much?

GO "NATIVE" OR DROUGHT-RESISTANT TO SAVE WATER, ELIMINATE PESTICIDES

With the diversity of native trees, shrubs and perennials found in the natural areas just outside our doorstep, it's easy to take them for granted. But the native plants that have evolved in the region have adapted to our dry summer conditions, and along with drought-resistant non-native species can play an important role in creating a Zero Waste yard and garden that is appealing and biodiverse.

We asked Rob Jackson, who has operated Whiskey Creek Nursery since 1977, to recommend native and drought-resistant plants that people could introduce into their yards and gardens. Before you plant he suggests doing some research. Then decide what you like, build up your soils if needed and determine where the plants that you have selected will work best to complement your garden.



Rob Jackson shows the red hips on a Nootka rose, one of his recommendations for native and drought-resistant plants.



Kinnikinnick

A native ground cover, Kinnikinnick only grows three to four feet high. It does best in sunny locations with sandy well drained soils.

Red-flowering currant This native species or the popular King Edward hybrid, blooms in mid spring and its rose-coloured flowers are a magnet for hummingbirds. It requires little water, should be planted in well-drained soil in sunny or part shade locations, and works well as a shrub in a mixed border garden.

Red osier dogwood Typically found in wet sites, this shrubby dogwood will tolerate dry locations if shaded or mulched. It grows to about ten feet in height and its bright red stems provide an attractive background.

Red Columbine This native perennial herb features nodding red and yellow flowers that attract hummingbirds and butterflies. It adapts to most soils in open sites or partial shade.

Tiger lily This striking native perennial with its bright orange spotted flowers adds a splash of colour to gardens. It does well in rich well-

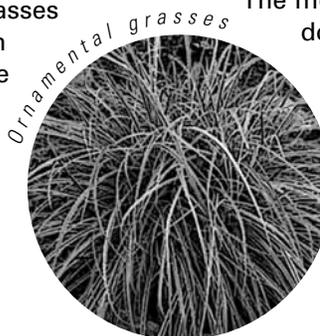


drained soil in part sun to shade locations.

Ornamental grasses

Drought tolerant ornamental grasses include fountain grass, blue fescue and maiden grass.

They range from three to eight feet in height and usually require full sun to part shade conditions and work well as individual plants and screens.



Leyland cypress This hybrid of our native yellow cedar and the Monterey cypress is a fast-growing pyramid-shaped evergreen that can reach a height of over 30 feet. It grows quickly even in poor soils, requires no water after the first year, is not eaten by deer, and is good for screening or buffer strips on larger acreages.

Nootka rose Our native wild rose blooms with large pink flowers in late spring. This hardy deciduous shrub adapts to most soil and light conditions. It grows up to ten feet tall and is useful as a hedge or blocks for screening or as a background plant.

White wonder dogwood (Eddie's)

The most popular cultivated dogwood in the region, this hybrid's large white flowers make a dramatic display in late spring. In well-drained soil it grows up to 25 feet high and is used as a decorative tree or centrepiece for a mixed bed.

Snowberry This hardy native shrub produces pink to white flowers and clusters of white berries. It adapts well to most soils and tolerates both sun and shade. It averages two to four feet in height and works well as an individual shrub or for hedging.



Herb gardens are drought-tolerant, add colour to your garden, and attract butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects.



ZERO WASTE LANDSCAPING RESOURCES

Books and magazines:

Western Garden Book – Rob Jackson of Whiskey Creek Nursery highly recommends this reference for western gardeners. Published by Sunset Publications, it features guides to garden planning, basic landscape plant selection, and a detailed plant encyclopedia.

How to Get Your Lawn Off Grass – Jamie Wallace of Carey's Garden Designs recommends this "North American Guide to Turning Off the Tap and Going Native". Written by Sechelt, BC author Carole Rubin and published by Harbour Publishing, this book teaches how to conserve water and eliminate pesticides and synthetic fertilizers by converting lawns to native ground covers.

GardenWise – Jamie Wallace recommends this gardening magazine that focuses on the needs and interests of BC gardeners. Its plant and garden profiles, feature articles, and columns provide a source of inspiration for creating naturalistic gardens.

Websites:

- o Go to the Zero Waste link on the RDN Website at www.rdn.bc.ca for resources on Zero Waste Landscaping and composting. Download a copy of *Environmentally Responsible Gardening in the RDN* for ideas and tips on natural gardening. Check out the WaterSmart section of the RDN Website for information on how your home or business can conserve water.
- o Visit the Native Plant Society of British Columbia at www.npsbc.org for information, education and events on BC native plants. The site includes a directory of native plant nurseries and seed suppliers in BC and on Vancouver Island.
- o Learn how you can "shrink your lawn and grow your pleasure" at www.lesslawn.com The site features helpful sections on landscaping techniques, designs and resources.

- o Check out www.eartheasy.com for ideas for sustainable living and how organic lawns and gardens can make a difference. It features sections on Zero Waste Landscaping or conservation of water through creative gardening and natural lawn care and lawn alternatives.
- o For helpful information on selecting native plants, visit www.soundnativeplants.com It includes a useful native species selection guide with notes on the transplanting success for many species.

Recycling Yard and Garden Waste

Households throughout the RDN have found backyard composting an easy way to turn yard and garden waste into an organic material that can be reapplied to the soil. For people who have green waste they can't compost or recycle, here are some options.

Self Haul – Take your yard and garden waste (fees apply) to:

Regional Landfill – 1105 Cedar Road, Nanaimo, (250) 722-2044

Transfer Station – 860 Church Road, Parksville (250) 248-5254

International Composting Corp. (ICC)
981 Maughan Road, Nanaimo
(250) 722-4614

Scheduled and on-call collection

services – Businesses offering scheduled or on-call collection include:

EnviroCore Recycling
Call (250) 758-2545

International Paper Industries (IPI)
Call (250) 716-3340

Grasshopper Yard Waste Collection
Call (250) 716-8181

The above businesses serve Nanaimo, but call to see if they extend to your area. If you are located outside the City of Nanaimo and provide a yard and garden waste collection service or know a business that does, please contact RDN Environmental Services at 1-877-607-4111 for listing on the RDN website.

No yard or garden waste in the Regional Landfill

Since the year 2000, all yard and garden waste dropped off at the Regional Landfill and Church Road Transfer Station has been composted at a composting facility for beneficial reuse. The RDN regularly requests bids to obtain the best price for this service.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

The commercial food waste diversion success story

Compostable organic material such as food, soiled paper products and yard and garden waste represents the largest component of our waste stream. In June 2005 the RDN banned commercial food waste from its landfill and transfer station as the first step in an organics diversion strategy.

Thanks to the efforts of food services businesses, educational and health care facilities and food wholesalers and distributors, a significant portion of our organic waste stream is now being diverted from the region's waste stream. Instead of being landfilled, commercial food waste supplies feedstock to a licensed composting facility in the region and is transformed into a beneficial product that enhances soil.

Progress on the road to Zero Waste

The Regional District of Nanaimo was among the first in Canada to adopt a Zero Waste approach to eliminating garbage and creating a more sustainable region. In 2005, by reducing, reusing and recycling residents and businesses in the region diverted 55 per cent of their waste from the landfill.

We have now targeted a 75 per cent diversion by 2010, a goal we will realize through our region's recently approved Solid Waste Management Plan. Learn more in the next edition of Zero Waste about how organics diversion and other programs will help move us along to the road to becoming a Zero Waste region.