



Fireside Gardening: Winter YardScaping Tips

In the winter, you can't plant, mow, or water your yard. Instead, you can spend those carefree hours creating a beautiful YardScape in your mind! The prompts below will help you incorporate ecological lawn care strategies into planning a new look for your yard, one that will require less maintenance and less expense than the outdated, overrated "perfect" lawn of old. Trade in your Weed'n'Feed for a YardScaping lawn sign from the YardScaping Partnership that will let your neighborhood know this spring that yours is a truly green yard!

Reflect on what you have

Sketch a map of your yard and its features, preferably on graph paper, that includes:

- all buildings, driveway, walkways, and the street
- garden beds, water gardens, groundcover, trees, shrubs
- current uses, such as, sitting areas, outdoor grill, children's swings, sports areas, garden work area or compost bin, vistas for visual enjoyment

Highlight in yellow marker those areas of lawn where you have turf challenges, such as:

- dry areas, areas where water collects, gullies, or eroding soil
- heavily worn, compacted, or pest-damaged turf
- shaded, grassy areas that get less than six hours of sun a day—the minimum for a healthy lawn

Interview yourself

Ask yourself, "What would I like my yard to do for me?" Are there areas of your lawn that demand more attention, maintenance, or chemicals than you would like? Are there views from inside your home that you could enhance by planting different vegetation?

Design your ideal yard

Now create another map that has all the elements that you would like to have in your yard. Identify alternatives to grass, such as ground cover or patio stones, in those areas that you have identified as turf-challenged.

Ask the experts

Visit nurseries and garden supply stores to learn more about native plants, low-maintenance grass seed mixes, ecological landscaping techniques, and commonsense pest control. The staff will love to have the company. This time of the year, they'll have more time to brainstorm with you, and you'll appreciate seeing some lush greenery. You can also find inspiration at the Portland Flower Show on March 7–11, 2007, at the Portland Company Marine Complex on the Portland waterfront. *Visit the YardScaping Partnership booth and fill out a free raffle ticket for our drawing. You could win a beautiful scythe, a top-of-the-line garden cart, a gift certificate to one of the area's premier nurseries, or enough YardScaping grass seed mixture to plant a 5,000-square-foot lawn!*

Become a YardScaper

Request a YardScaping packet, a YardScaping lawn sign, or a presentation for a neighborhood association or garden club by contacting the Maine YardScaping Partnership (207-287-2731, yardscaping@maine.gov). YardScaping materials provide a step-by-step guide to creating an ecologically sound landscape. A YardScaping sign indicates that the homeowner practices healthy yard care.

YardScaping Demonstration Site

Be sure to check out the Back Cove YardScaping Demonstration Project, coming to Portland soon.

YardScaping hopes to inspire Maine people to create and maintain healthy landscapes through ecologically based practices that minimize reliance on water, fertilizer, and pesticides. The Maine YardScaping Partnership was formed out of the rising concern among statewide organizations and agencies over the possible pollution caused by yard care chemicals washing away into water bodies, as well as the risks of pesticide exposure to people, pets, and wildlife.