

NATURESCAPING

*Healthy gardens for your family * Critical habitat for our pollinators*



Naturescaping embraces simple, easy-to-implement practices that encourage a diversity of native plant and wildlife species, help conserve water usage, reduce the need for toxic chemicals, manage stormwater on-site, and save you time and money on landscape maintenance! A low diversity of plant, invertebrate, and wildlife communities sets the stage for unwanted pests and disease, which often leads us to reactive solutions like pesticides and herbicides. Naturescaping mimics the lessons from nature to help you design a landscape that provides quality habitat, attracts a diverse mix of beneficial plants and wildlife, and provides a safe, healthy landscape for your family.

Start with the basics:

□ Clarify your goals

Adopt a motto of “Begin with the end in mind” to help clarify your expectations, assess your available resources, and keep the scope of work focused and manageable.

How?

- Ask yourself some basic questions: How do I want to use this space? What behaviors do I want to change? How can I apply my values to my garden?
- Additional questions: Do you want to attract beneficial pollinators for your veggie garden? Conserve water during the summer? Reduce chemical use? Reduce maintenance?

□ Provide a Food Source

A wide range of food sources are needed to support each life cycle phase of local wildlife and pollinators. For instance, while berries are a good food source for birds in the summer and fall, insects are the primary food source for young fledglings in the spring.

How?

- Embrace some leaf litter in the garden. Organic matter on the soil surface is a rich source of food for ground-feeding birds, in addition to the earthworms that help improve soil health.
- A diversity of plants - especially those native to the Pacific Northwest - will provide a diversity of food options, including acorns, nuts, pollen, berries, nectar, and seeds.
- Supplement with feeders, if necessary, but remember to clean your feeders regularly.

Helpful resources:

- Bringing Nature Home - Douglas W. Tallamy
- Attracting Native Pollinators - The Xerces Society
- Backyard Habitat Certification Program (www.backyardhabitats.org)

□ Provide Water

Urbanization has eliminated many natural water sources for local wildlife. According to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, a water source in your backyard will attract more wildlife than supplemental food sources (such as bird feeders).

How?

- Install a classic birdbath
- Incorporate concave stones, such as basalt basins, into your landscaping
- Create a recirculating water feature

□ Create Cover

Pollinators and wildlife need safe places to rest, shelter from the elements, and find protection from predators.

How?

- Include cover in your landscape via upright tree snags, downed logs, piles of rocks, brush piles, and even a bit of leaf litter.
- Densely planted thickets and hedgerows are an opportunity to provide both food and shelter.
- Build a structure for a specific species, such as bluebird boxes, bat houses, or mason bee boxes.

Expert tips to help your naturescape garden thrive!



Oregon white oak - *Quercus garryana*



Western Bluebird - *Sialia mexicana*



Western Bumblebee - *Bombus occidentalis*

Start With What You Have

- Assess the habitat value of the plants currently in your yard. How do they benefit pollinators and wildlife?
- Protect areas of high habitat value, such as mature trees.
- Replace the lowest value plants over time with higher value plant guilds, such as Willamette Valley natives or pollinator-friendly ornamentals.
- Embrace Oregon's 'sense of place' and try to incorporate these elements into your garden - tall majestic trees, lush conifer forests, basalt geology, flowing water and rainfall, etc.

Plan for Success

- Start small by simply replacing a corner of your existing garden or a patch of unused lawn. Add a new section each year as time and resources allow.
- Right Plant, Right Place - select plants that are appropriate for the conditions, including sun, water, and size requirements.
- Cluster your native plants together. A native ecosystem functions best when all parts are interacting together.
- The key to a low-maintenance garden is to use a manageable number of plant varieties, organize them into cohesive groupings, and utilize a simple groundcover.
- Avoid unnecessary use of synthetic pesticides, especially on plants that are in bloom. Tolerate the imperfections and embrace the changing character of your garden.

Master the Details

- It all starts with healthy soil! Perform a soil test to determine nutrient needs of your plants and add compost to support beneficial soil microorganisms.
- Think in vertical layers. Multiple layers in your garden, ranging from large trees down to a low groundcovers, can support a wider diversity of wildlife.
- Plant individual species in groups of 3 or 5. Larger clusters increase visibility and the foraging efficiency of pollinators.
- Extend the bloom season. Aim to always have 3 flowering plants in bloom from early spring through late fall.
- Provide a diversity of flower types that accommodate both generalists (honey bees) and specialists. For instance, bumble bees prefer large open flowers while hummingbirds seek out narrow, tubular flowers.



Visit www.conservationdistrict.org to learn more about the urban conservation program and additional services offered by the Clackamas County Soil and Water Conservation District.

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