Easily Start Your Sustainable Dream Yard

What does your dream yard look like? It's time to start planning what is needed to create *your* dream yard. If you want to sustain our planet's environment, your landscape planting design and needs are the same as those for a traditional yard: style (English garden, Country garden, etc.), an organized look ("curb appeal") and the proper tools (trowels, weed digger, shovels, gloves, etc.). To appeal to the eye of the general public, place lower, flowering plants in full view. Start small so it's easy to manage. Keep plants out of the way of overhead lines and utility boxes, plant wet-footed plants in low areas, and place your garden where you can see and enjoy it.

My dream yard supports everything from native butterflies, hummingbirds and songbirds with the plants they need to survive down to the tiny, beneficial nematodes in my soil. I want to create a healthy yard for wildlife, me and my community.

How can your yard help sustain our planet?

1. *Garden Pest Control* - Native insects ("bugs") are a critical food source. They are rich in protein for wildlife (especially for native songbirds and hummingbirds), so stop chemical use to keep insects alive and well. Native insects also naturally attract predatory insects that eat other insects that cause visible damage to plants.
2. *Lawn Maintenance* - Apply corn gluten mid-March to mid-April and mid-August to mid-September for pre-emergent, broad-leaf weed control and as a natural fertilizer. Some organic insecticides are toxic to bees. See them in the table on page 2 at http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/xerces-organic-approved-pesticides-factsheet.pdf. Notice that corn gluten is in the green! Over-seeding also helps squeeze out weeds.
3. *Native Plants* - Add plants native to your region to provide natural wildlife food, including nuts, berries, the insects that depend on them, etc. Everyone seems to have a different explanation about what is native. To simplify, I buy non-invasive plants found in nearby natural areas that have soil conditions similar to my garden. After gradually cutting back for three years, I stopped watering the garden because native plants grow deep tap roots. Most native plants placed in the right location go dormant rather than dying from our Ohio droughts.
4. *Invasive Plants* - Avoid plants invasive to our area by checking the bottom of www.oipc.info/specieslist.html.
5. *More Tips* - Follow the tips on the "Environmentally Friendly Lawn and Garden Care" flier on the "How Do I Do This" tab on our Ohio-specific website www.backyardhabitat.info/. Consider signing up for the monthly Nature Scoop email with timely Ohio tips for your yard and garden by sending an email with "Subscribe" in the subject line to me at marc-a@columbus.rr.com.

Which native plants are the most helpful?

The top native trees to support our environment are those that support the largest number of caterpillar species: Red or White Oak (*Quercus*) supports 534 species (you can start an Oak by planting an acorn), Cherry/Plum (*Prunus*) supports 456 species, Willow (*Salix*) also supports 456 species, and Birch (*Betula*) supports 413 species. This and more helpful information is in Douglas Tallamy's book called *Bringing Nature Home (Updated and Expanded)* published by Timber Press.

I also want flowers to support insects that pollinate the plants, so I choose those on which native butterflies and moths lay their eggs, drink nectar and find shelter. For starters, see "Attract Butterflies to your Ohio Yard" and "Butterfly Quick Start" on the "How Do I Do This" tab at: www.backyardhabitat.info/.

Feel free to download and share all the fliers on the website.

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