

# Sustainable Lawns: Landscaping with Native Plants



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## Abstract:

*Maintenance practices for manicured landscapes negatively affect the environment. Pesticides and fertilizers applied to lawns run off and pollute surface and ground water causing many problems. These chemicals can also get into drinking water supplies. What is the solution? Landscaping using native plants and organic methods is a start. Native plants have long roots which retain storm water, reducing runoff. Planting native species increases the biodiversity of the area. The typical Minnesotan lawn should be replaced by native landscaping because of its reduced environmental impact, its low maintenance and water use, and its aesthetic and economic benefits.*



Native Landscaping  
[www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov)

Vs.



Conventional Landscaping  
[www.downtoearthoic.com](http://www.downtoearthoic.com)

## Environmental Benefits:

Native plants do not need fertilizers. The reduced use of chemicals in yards will help keep Minnesota's freshwater clean and safe for human use. Using native plants in landscaping helps restore Minnesota back to its original design. Native grasses typically need to be mowed only once or twice a year. This reduces the amount of gasoline burned by lawn mowers, decreasing the amount of pollution entering the atmosphere.

## Native Grasses:

Native grasses require no manual watering or fertilizer. Fescue and Buffalo Grass are two examples.



Fescue  
[www.caf.wvu.edu](http://www.caf.wvu.edu)



Buffalo Grass  
[www.gardenet.com](http://www.gardenet.com)

## Native Plants:

According to the federal Plant Conservation Alliance a native plant is one that grows naturally in a particular area or region without human intervention. North America is divided into fifteen plant provinces. Native landscaping uses only plants native to the area and therefore these plants need no fertilizer or manual watering because they have adapted to the conditions around them.

## Economic Benefits:

Contemporary landscapes are becoming increasingly expensive. It is estimated that the 40 million lawn mowers in the US consume 200 million gallons of gasoline annually. Landscaping with native plants requires no fertilizer which initially cuts costs. A native lawn does not need to be watered so there is no need for a sprinkler or irrigation system. This also conserves water so that it is available for other uses.



Butterfly Milkweed  
[arboretum.unl.edu](http://arboretum.unl.edu)



Hoary Vervain  
[cropwatch.unl.edu](http://cropwatch.unl.edu)



Compass Plant  
[www.museum.state.il.us](http://www.museum.state.il.us)

## Conclusion:

Landscaping with native plants is a viable option for homeowners. It is economically efficient, environmentally sustainable, and an aesthetically beautiful alternative to the norm. The only thing stopping this sustainable practice is the typical mindset of homeowners today. A new outlook must arise in order to create a new standard lawn.

