

Sustainable Landscape Evaluation Tool



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How environmentally sustainable is your landscape? This tool offers you an opportunity to consider the impacts that your yard or public space may have on local eco-systems and on the wider environment. The tool can be used for evaluating an existing landscape or in planning the development of a new landscape. The tool will also assist you in considering the impacts of a variety of landscape management practices.

Read each of the following statements and enter the most appropriate number in the box on the right according to the following scale:

- 0 – Not true at all for my landscape**
- 1 – Somewhat true for my landscape**
- 2. - Very true for my landscape**
- 3. – Completely true for my landscape**

SOIL	1. Organic matter such as compost is added to soils at least once per year.		
	2. Non-organic fertilizers and pesticides are avoided to protect soil biology.		
	3. Soils are not excessively cultivated or disturbed by such practices as rototilling and are not overly compacted by heavy machinery or cultivation when wet.		
	4. Soils are protected from erosion by the use of mulches or cover crops.		
	5. Existing soils are improved and protected rather than importing soils from off-site.		
	Total for Soils		
WATER	1. Soils have a high level of organic matter (more than 5%) to retain moisture.		
	2. The landscape is contoured to deliver water to areas and plants that need it.		
	3. Mulches are used to reduce moisture loss from soils through evaporation.		
	4. Rooftop rain water is collected and stored for use in the home or landscape.		
	5. Drought tolerant plants (including grasses and ground covers) are used in dry areas of the landscape.		
	6. Plants are grouped together according to their water needs.		
	7. Supplementary watering is achieved through efficient means such as drip-lines.		
	8. Grey water from the home is appropriately and safely used in the landscape.		
	Total for Water		



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ENERGY	1. Trees, shrubs and vines are sited appropriately to provide a cooling effect to the home in summer (shading and transpiration) and protection from cold winter winds (wind breaks).		
	2. Lawns requiring the use of gas or electrically powered mowers are minimized or eliminated.		
	3. Landscape construction methods and on-going maintenance use relatively low amounts of fossil fuels (i.e. hand tools over heavy machinery).		
	4. The landscape produces some food thereby reducing energy used in commercial food production, transportation and refrigeration.		
	5. Wind power is utilized in the form of an outdoor clothes-line.		
	6. Passive solar energy (i.e. greenhouses, cold-frames, solar food de-hydrators, and solar photo-voltaics (for outdoor lighting, pumps, etc.) are used where possible.		
	Total for Energy		
PLANTS & BIODIVERSITY	1. Plants are diverse in the number of species including many native species.		
	2. Perennial edible plant species including fruits, berries, perennial vegetables and herbs are significantly integrated into the landscape.		
	3. Appropriate space is allocated for growing annual vegetables and herbs.		
	4. Selected plants are well adapted to the local climate and geography, require few if any external "in-puts", and are appropriately sited in the landscape.		
	5. Micro climates (i.e. warm spots, wet spots, protected spots) are effectively used and/or created to extend the growing season and to create appropriate habitat for plant and animal species.		
	6. Plants for attracting beneficial insects (i.e. pollinators and pest predators) are dispersed throughout the landscape.		
	7. Trees, shrubs, perennials, and annuals that provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies and other wildlife are integrated into the landscape.		
	8. Plants that perform a soil-building function (i.e. nitrogen fixation, green manures, compost crops) are integrated into the landscape.		
	9. Plantings are distributed in several layers throughout the landscape including ground covers, lower growing annuals and perennials, higher growing annuals and perennials, shrubs, small trees, large trees and vines.		
	10. Additional features to support bio-diversity such as leaf-littered areas, "wild areas", downed logs, "snags", water sources, bird houses and feeders, bat houses, etc. are integrated into the landscape.		
	Total for Plants and Bio-diversity		

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 1 – Somewhat true for my landscape 3. – Completely true for my landscape

MATERIALS	1. Priority is given to the use of existing on-site materials over the importing of materials from off-site.		
	2. Landscape construction materials (for fences, pathways, decks, patios, features, etc.) are salvaged or recycled.		
	3. Landscape construction materials are locally produced.		
	4. Landscape construction materials are renewable and/or recyclable.		
	5. Landscape construction materials have relatively <i>low embodied energy</i> (energy used in their creation) and <i>low embodied affect</i> (i.e. pollution, destruction of eco-systems, negative social consequences, etc.).		
	6. Hard-scapes (decks, fences, sidewalks) are designed and constructed with longevity and flexibility in mind.		
Total for Materials			
WASTE	1. Waste materials from construction are minimized and are absorbed/utilized on-site or recycled whenever possible.		
	2. Composting of all appropriate house waste and yard waste takes place within the landscape and finished compost is incorporated back into the soil.		
	3. No toxic or otherwise harmful chemicals (i.e. pesticides, herbicides, synthetic fertilizers) are required or used within the landscape and the landscape does not leech any harmful substance into the surrounding environment.		
	4. Leaf litter and grass clippings are left on the ground wherever possible.		
	5. "Grey water" from the home is appropriately and safely used in the landscape.		
Total for Waste			
Grand Total			
SUMMARY	0 – 40: Red alert!! - your landscape may be having a very negative environmental impact.		
	40 – 60: Caution ... there are many positive changes you could still consider for your yard.		
	60 - 80: OK ... you are heading in the right direction – keep moving forward.		
	80 – 100: Good work ... you have just a few more elements to attend to.		
	100- 120: Bravo!! You are modeling environmentally sustainable landscape practices...		



Natural, Sustainable and Edible Landscapes
www.theurbanfarmer.ca theurbanfarmer@shaw.ca