Sustainable Landscaping Guidance

As a homeowner, you have become a steward of your small but essential part of the ecosystem. The Scarsdale Conservation Advisory Council has prepared this guidance on landscaping strategies that meaningfully benefit your family, community and environment. All photos were taken in or near Scarsdale.

Design For Canopy

Large Canopy Tree

Canopy serves a purpose, and the more of it the better. Larger canopy trees inordinately benefit wildlife, soak up water, recycle the air, and help keep us cool during the summer. Scarsdale's beauty is in large part derived from its abundance of trees, a resource which must be continuously maintained.

There are many canopy trees which can be planted to enhance your property; smaller trees for placement near utility lines, larger ones to provide summer shade and screen your property, trees that thrive in wet areas and soak up lots of water, and others which particularly benefit wildlife. Canopy trees are a great investment in your property, destined to become a beautiful part of the landscape.

Design Progressively

Progressive landscape design incorporates the best lessons learned in design and stewardship while enhancing your property.

Rainwater gardens. Embrace rainwater as a gift from nature. A rain garden is designed to capture water for plants that thrive in wet conditions. Rain gardens are both functional and aesthetic, reducing runoff while producing brilliant seasonal displays.

Rain Garden at the Scarsdale Library

Front Lawn Garden

Lawn gardens. Lawn gardens bring life. A lawn garden is a portion of the lawn dedicated to plantings that diversify the landscape and can easily remain green year long. Lawn gardens can incorporate beneficial plants that bring delightful life – including butterflies, bees and birds – to your lawn.

Plant Native Varieties

Native plants provide hospitable and productive homes for birds and other animals who share our Village. It is easy to select beautiful plants that are ideally suited to the ecosystem of the Northeast. They benefit native wildlife as well as the homeowner.

Low maintenance. Native plants fare better because they are well-adapted to our climate, requiring less maintenance and often less watering to remain healthy and vibrant.

Beauty. Native species provide flowers, colorful fruits, seeds and berries, producing a spectrum of vibrant colors. And their show isn't just skin deep; it's part of the plants' unique place in the local ecosystem.

Healthier. Native plants are better adapted and so they require less help to stay healthy. They reduce our reliance on synthetic sprays and fertilizers, which can be harmful and often find their way into local waterways.

Native Northeastern Plants In Bloom

Butterfly Feeding on Native Plants

Habitat. Native plants offer a more suitable habitat for local wildlife than plants that evolved elsewhere. They provide nectar for pollinators such as hummingbirds, native bees and butterflies, and protective shelter for many animals. The native nuts, seeds, and fruits produced by these plants offer essential foods for all forms of wildlife. When you choose to plant a non-native species, you may be losing an opportunity to benefit local wildlife.

Use Alternative Screening

A*rborvitae* is a common selection for screening homes from neighbors. However, a number of fine alternatives are available that will make your property more unique, while encouraging beneficial biological diversity. Choices include evergreen and deciduous hedges and trees. Many of these provide plentiful food for wildlife. Screening with a mix of plants enhances your landscape's visual interest and creates even greater diversity.

Blue Spruce

Additional Resources for Sustainable Landscaping

- Native Plant Center of SUNY Westchester (sunywcc.edu/plants)
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (wildflower.org/plants)
- Landscape for Life (landscapeforlife.org)
- …more resources can be found on scarsdale.com