

Garden for Nature ~ 10 Things to Get You Started *

* From Doug Tallamy, Homegrown National Park website, homegrownnationalpark.org

1. SHRINK THE LAWN (Click on the underlined text for more information.)

Every square foot dedicated to lawn is a square foot that is degrading local ecosystems. Reduce the lawn by half. Restrict turf to wide paths for walking and to define beds, tree groves and play areas.

2. REMOVE INVASIVE SPECIES

Invasive plants ruin our local ecosystems. If every property owner avoided planting and removed the worst of these invasives, the goal of reducing their negative impact would be largely realized.

3. PLANT KEYSTONE GENERA

Landscapes that do not contain one or more species from keystone genera will have failed food webs, even if the diversity of other plants is high. A few species of keystone plants will form the backbone of local ecosystems, particularly in terms of producing the food that fuels insects.

4. BE GENEROUS WITH YOUR PLANTINGS

To realize the ecological potential of our landscapes, we have to increase the abundance and diversity of our plantings. If you have one native tree in your yard, consider adding two more. If you have just a few keystone non-woody plants in your garden, plant more so they support the wildlife that will use them as host plants.

5. PLANT FOR SPECIALIST POLLINATORS

Many of our native bee species specialize on particular plant groups when gathering pollen for their larvae. To meet their needs, and also sustain them throughout all growing seasons, use plants these specialists rely on.

6. NETWORK WITH NEIGHBORS

Once you begin to make positive changes in your yard, your neighbors will want to join you. By influencing them you will begin to build ecological networks where you live.

7. BUILD A CONSERVATION HARDSCAPE

Use motion sensor security lights to protect nocturnal species habitat. Mow no lower than three inches to protect wildlife in the ground.

8. CREATE CATERPILLAR PUPATION SITES UNDER YOUR TREES

Replace lawn under trees with well-planted beds with native groundcovers. Leave leaf litter under your trees and around your shrubs.

9. DO NOT SPRAY OR FERTILIZE

Insecticides and herbicides are contrary to the goal of restoring ecosystems. Fertilizers are also unnecessary. Creating soils rich in organic matter will support healthy plants.

10. EDUCATE YOUR CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Most landscaping rules were developed before we learned about the importance of supporting local ecosystems through our choice of plants and practices in our yards. Work to influence healthy and necessary changes in plantings and policies in your association and city.



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