

## Where to Begin???

Have you struggled with getting started on a more eco-friendly re-make of your landscape? Feel overwhelmed? You are not alone! There is so much more to consider these days than just what looks pretty, so resolve to take your time and look forward to the process of making it happen, as well as the end result.

### GETTING STARTED

#### Read this guide!

They don't call it The Web of Life for nothing! Everything is connected and we are all learning, strand by strand. Use the basics here to begin to get your head around what may be new concepts. Use the resources listed and go to the web for more details. Relax. It will all make perfect sense once you get going. Be on the look out for more on FLC's website.

#### Review Your Landscape

With these concepts in mind, spend time on your property—with a notebook and maybe a camera. Note things like shade, sun, natural drainage, edges, fencerows, areas you use or don't use. Don't be overly concerned with what to do, or how, or how much it might cost. Pretend it's not even your yard! No attachment to the way it is. What improvements could benefit your landscape?

#### Make a Plan

Yes, this will be a challenge, but it's fun. Get lots of scrap paper for roughing out

maps of your property. Play around with ideas using the notes you made earlier. Why not a hedgerow on the back fence? Where are the problem invasives? Could a berm or water garden catch runoff? Hey! There's room for big trees in the lawn that would shade the house in summer. If you need help planning, check out the resources section. Stop by nurseries and gardens, take classes, go to conferences. These are all excellent opportunities to see examples that will help you visualize what could work for your unique situation. There is always more to learn.

#### Make it Happen

Chose a project, and get going! Most landscape projects such as planting are seasonally dependent, so choose accordingly. Seek out knowledgeable professionals if it's a big job. We may be able to guide you in your selection.

#### Enjoy!

These landscapes are really ALIVE!  
*Let them entertain you!*



*"Harmony with land is like harmony with a friend; you cannot cherish his right hand and chop off his left. That is to say, you cannot love game and hate predators... The land is one organism."*  
— Aldo Leopold

### RESOURCES...

#### BOOKS

***Bringing Nature Home*, Douglas W. Tallamy; 2007**

<http://bringingnaturehome.net/>; Highly readable though scientific discussion of our relationship to gardens and nature.

***Noah's Garden, Restoring the Ecology of Our Own Backyards*,**

Sarah Stein; 1995 Very helpful for understanding how your backyard should work.

***Gardening with The Native Plants of Tennessee*, Margie Hunter;**

2002 An EXCELLENT resource for all things related to native plants including nursery sources.

***Insects and Gardens, In Pursuit of Garden Ecology*, Eric Grissell;**

2002 Great resource to learn about the creeping crawling members of our landscape.

#### CONFERENCE

**Cullowhee Native Plant Conference.** Annually in late July at Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, N.C. Superb resource for learning and networking. Highly recommended.

#### WEBSITES

<http://thesustainablelandscape.com/>

TN Exotic Pest Plant Council: <http://www.tneppc.org/>

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<http://www.littleriverwatershed.org/>

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[www.foothillsland.org](http://www.foothillsland.org)

Field GUIDE to  
**SUSTAINABLE  
LANDSCAPES**  
for Tennessee



Small changes

**BIG impacts**

Wise choices for creating beautiful, healthy landscapes we can all feel good about.

# Landscapes Matter

## You Have the Power • Use it Wisely

As a Land Trust we are proud of the 36,000+ acres we have helped to protect. However, that leaves 26,960,200 acres of TN we have no control over. Something like 23,000,000 acres (23 MILLION ACRES!) of TN is privately owned. We need your help! We each choose how our piece of TN is managed. Think about that for just a second....collectively we control the TN landscape and can make or break the environment. Each of us has the power to choose wisely – or not. Each of us has the power to make a difference so that all of us can continue to enjoy the beautiful and healthy landscapes we all love here in this natural wonderland that is Tennessee.

### Your Landscape Matters!

Sustainable Landscapes are ones that support a healthy environment while providing us with food, beauty and a fulfilling lifestyle. Ones that aim to do no harm, help maintain the diversity and balance we all need and appreciate.

Being a slave to your property is no fun. Paving it over however, has its own problems. Changing the way we relate to our landscapes, on the other hand, can be refreshing and rewarding. Understanding how what you do with those resources you steward every day gives a true sense of purpose and makes your efforts much more rewarding. Whether you oversee hundreds of acres or a few pots on the porch, you can enjoy the benefits of choosing your methods wisely.

What we offer here is a brief guide to help you begin to explore those choices for your situation and to provide more information to lead you further as you and your piece of ground evolve. We urge you not to rush. Spend quality time in your landscape considering what changes would be most beneficial and reasonable for you.



*It's your land and your time — use them wisely.*

*“Good farmers, who take seriously their duties as stewards of Creation and of their land's inheritors, contribute to the welfare of society in more ways than society usually acknowledges, or even knows. These farmers produce valuable goods, of course; but they also conserve soil, they conserve water, they conserve wildlife, they conserve open space, they conserve scenery.” — Wendell Berry*

# BEYOND PRETTY

Simple changes we can all live with

**Below is a guide to common areas of concern and suggestions for alternatives. You will need to go to the references for details. We will also be including more information on the FLC website ([www.foothillsland.org](http://www.foothillsland.org)) over time so remember to check back.**

## PROBLEMS

**Wildlife** • Lack of diversity in plant species and structure in landscapes • Cannot support diversity in animals • Lack of connectivity in landscapes so wildlife cannot easily move to feed and breed • Lack of dead trees for cavity nesting birds • Lack of nectar sources and host plants • Lack of wetlands.

**Invasive Exotic Plants** • Some non-native plants such as privet and Japanese honeysuckle spread unchecked and dominate landscapes • This minimizes the diversity of plant species and usually crowds out existing native plants.

**Water Quality** • Many chemicals used in landscaping such as pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers are easily washed into waterways during rains or irrigation. These chemicals can harm people and pets as well as wildlife, including many aquatic species • Septic systems can contaminate waterways • Erosion from bare soils clogs roadways and waterways and siltation inhibits breeding of many aquatic species.



## SOLUTIONS

**Wildlife** • Add more species of plants, especially those native to the area, in multiple layers – groundcover, shrubs, vines, trees • Provide areas of cover such as natural woodlands and shrubby edges. Include water sources • Add bird houses • Allow some natural edges and dead trees • Plant nectar producing species and host plants that will bloom throughout the growing season, especially natives.

**Invasive Exotic Plants** • Remove invasive exotic species especially if near natural areas. If total removal is not practical, control their spread. Include plantings of native species as much as possible • DON'T PLANT KNOWN INVASIVE EXOTIC PLANTS.

**Water Quality** • Reduce/eliminate the use of toxic chemicals. Use these materials responsibly – follow the directions • Consider least toxic pesticides such as insecticidal soaps and other alternative methods such as IPM • Do not spray near streams or ponds • A few of the options available to you for protecting our waterways are: use plants adapted to your conditions, increase diversity of native species, minimize lawn, avoid species known to have pest issues, and avoid monocultures • Place septic fields away from potential flood zones. • Use permeable pavers, bioswales, berms and rain gardens to minimize runoff and maximize water infiltration (see references) • On waterways, leave a minimum of 20' (ideally 50' or more) in an un-mowed buffer of plants such as herbaceous perennials, shrubs and trees to slow and absorb runoff and minimize bank erosion • DON'T HERBICIDE CREEK BANKS! Plants hold the soil. Bare ground washes to the creek.

## PROBLEMS

**Water Use** • Extended droughts are not uncommon, the population is growing and global warming is real. Water availability will be a problem.

**Soils** • Erosion from bare soil pollutes waterways and degrades diversity of our landscapes • Healthy soils include billions of microorganisms that support plant growth with little or no additional fertilizers. Chemical fertilizers can create imbalances in healthy microorganisms limiting the soil's ability to sustain growth naturally • Healthy soils need little or no chemical supplements which often merely runoff into waterways.

**Air Quality** • Gasoline engines are significant contributors to greenhouse gasses. On average, an hour of mowing equals the pollution of 650 miles of driving • Removing trees reduces the earth's ability to absorb the excess CO<sub>2</sub> our increasing human activity generates, and to cool our environment • Coal fired electrical plants are one of heaviest emitters of CO<sub>2</sub>.

**Noise Pollution** • Neighborhoods are almost never without the noise and smell of mowers and blowers, which makes relaxing and enjoying the outdoors at home a challenge. Everyone needs less stress, and quiet time in the yard is most therapeutic. Noise also disturbs some wildlife which might otherwise appreciate your yard.



## SOLUTIONS

**Water Use** • Use plants adapted to your site. Mulch to conserve moisture • Reduce lawn • When you must irrigate, use targeted methods such as drip and timers.

**Soils** • Minimize bare ground by encouraging plant growth of some type on all soils or maintain mulch • Leave leaves and plant debris as mulch or compost • Use mulching mowers. THIS IS FREE FERTILIZER and sooo necessary for long term health of your soil • Use perennial plants including native grasses along with shrubs and trees. These have deep root systems to hold the soils year-round.

**Air Quality** • Minimize lawn and other high maintenance landscape features • Plant and leave more trees (especially deciduous trees) on the south and west of your house to cool it in summer and reduce the use of electricity. (See Noise Pollution below.)

**Noise Pollution** • Minimize lawn and other high maintenance landscape features • Use hand tools. Rake your leaves and use for mulch and compost • We all need to be more active, right?

