

Why healthy landscapes make a difference

The excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers are polluting our streams and lakes, when rain washes these chemicals from our lawns into local surface water bodies. A number of studies have shown that fertilizer and pesticide exposure, especially to children, can lead to an increased risk for cancer.

Quick-release, high nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizers feed the lawn too much too fast, make more work for you, and are more likely to wash off into local lakes. There the fertilizer feeds algae and chokes out fish and other water dwellers.

Pesticides and quick-release fertilizers may damage your lawn and landscape. Healthy lawns and landscapes grow on healthy soil. Overuse of chemicals can kill earthworms and other organisms that keep soil and plants healthy. This leads to more dependence on chemicals, higher water needs, and weaker plants.

Lawn and garden watering can make up more than 50% of our summer water use. That's when supplies are lowest and when fish, wildlife and people need it most. Much of this water is wasted through overwatering and evaporation due to poor timing.

HOW

to CHOOSE a
LANDSCAPE
company



for healthy
landscapes and a
healthy environment



REGIONAL WATER CONSERVATION COLLABORATION





When you hire someone to design, install or maintain your yard, it's worth asking what they will do to keep your yard and our Northwest environment healthy. Some landscape practices can be part of big problems in our environment, and they may pose a risk your to family's health, and can actually damage your plants and lawn.

Choose a landscape company that uses approaches to:

- build plant health
- reduce dependence on toxic chemicals
- conserve precious water



When hiring a landscape company use these checklists

Building Healthy Soil

Does the Company...

- Examine a core sample or use a soil test? Test for pH, NPK, and moisture.
- Prepare the soil properly, by tilling in compost and other amendments?
- "Grasscycle" or mulch mow?
- Mulch beds annually with leaves, chips, bark or compost?
- Use/recommend "natural organic" or "slow-release" fertilizers?

Selecting Plants that Will Thrive

Does the Company...

- Consider existing site conditions in the design such as sun, shade, and slope?
- Look for plants that love the Northwest?
- Look for pest-resistant plants?
- Consider the landscape's water needs, and select "drought-tolerant" plants?

Controlling Weeds, Pests, and Diseases Naturally

Does the company...

- Offer an "organic" or environmentally sensitive program?
- How does it differ from their chemically-based options?
- Explain their Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach?
- Properly identify and know the life cycles of insects, weeds and diseases?
- Monitor regularly for pests and weeds, but spray only when necessary?
- Use alternative approaches first, before turning to pesticides?
- Use the appropriate amount and ensure it stays on the affected area?
- Do they follow state and local standards for application?
- Do they suggest spot spraying to reduce the amount of pesticides applied?
- Recommend controlling weeds using hand tools, cultivation and mulching?

Watering for Healthy Plants (and lower water bills!)

Does the company...

- Make plant health and water conservation high priorities?
- Some key practices they should recommend:
 - Fit irrigation plan to your soil type (sandy soils need more frequent water).
 - Plan watering zones to meet each plant's needs, without overwatering.
 - Water deeply, to moisten the whole root zone, but infrequently.
 - Use drip irrigation or soaker hoses where appropriate, to reduce evaporation.
 - Understand and regularly maintain and adjust irrigation systems?
- If you have an automatic irrigation system, your professional should be able to:
 - Check the system annually for leaks, and replace broken sprinkler heads.
 - Help you set the controller to water just enough: less in the May and September "shoulder" seasons, more in mid-summer.
 - Show you how to skip a cycle when it's going to rain and the extra water would be wasted, and suggest other ways to save water too.

Other credentials to look for in a landscape company:

Experience and Education

How many years of local, hands-on experience do they have?

How long has their staff been working for them?

What horticultural education does their staff have?

Also ask about training in IPM, soils, insects, etc.

Affiliations and Certifications

Are they active in a landscape professional association, which can keep them up to date on research and new practices?

- American Society of Landscape Architects
Washington Chapter www.wasla.org Idaho Chapter www.imasla.org
- International Society of Arboriculture www.isa-arbor.com
- Irrigation Association www.irrigation.org
- Nursery and Landscape Association
Washington www.wsnla.org Idaho www.inlagrow.org
- Washington Association of Landscape Professionals
www.walp.org
- Washington Chapter, Association of Professional Landscape Designers
www.apldwa.org
- WaterSense Irrigation Partner www.epa.wa.gov/watersense

