

## Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia



*Many people move into new developments, attracted by the natural environment of those areas. This fact sheet provides information on ways to retain and enhance natural values in our communities.*

There are many guidelines that you can follow to protect environmental values during the landscaping of new developments. These are described in more detail in *Develop with Care 2014: Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia*.

### PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENT

Protecting the natural amenities on your property rewards you by retaining and raising your property value. Properties with or near to greenspaces can be worth 5–15% more than those further away. Natural areas also offer benefits such as providing habitat for birds and bats which in turn eat insect pests and mosquitoes, or by reducing heating and cooling costs where homes are shaded by trees

**Properties with trees and greenspace are worth 5–15 % more than those without**

### TIPS FOR THE LAWN AND GARDEN

☑ Minimize the amount of lawn. You will spend less time mowing the lawn, and will save money on watering. Instead, create low maintenance vegetation areas, using native ground covers and shrubs. These not only provide food for native wildlife such as birds and butterflies but also help maintain soil moisture conditions. See [www.naturescapebc.ca/](http://www.naturescapebc.ca/) for ideas.

☑ Plant using local, native species. Native plants provide food for wildlife and require less watering and other maintenance. NEVER USE INVASIVE ALIEN PLANTS such as English Ivy, Butterfly Bush, and Purple Loosestrife, as these plants or their seeds may spread into nearby natural ecosystems, displacing native species.

☑ Plant trees. As well as increasing the value of your property, mature healthy trees help to clean the air and maintain healthy soil conditions. The right tree in the right place will provide shade and windbreaks for your home (reducing your cooling and heating costs) in addition to providing habitats for local wildlife. Choose native tree species wherever possible.

☑ When removing hazard trees, consider leaving a stump of 3–5 m or higher. This creates a standing dead snag, a food source for woodpeckers and potential nesting sites for owls and other wildlife.

☑ Never top healthy trees as this promotes tree diseases and increases hazards. Use selective pruning methods to enhance views and make the tree more windfirm.

- ☑ Allow rainwater to soak into the ground by minimizing the area of hard, impervious surfaces (for example using paving stones rather than asphalt for driveways). This will help to maintain groundwater supplies and will protect the quality and quantity of water in nearby streams and wetlands.
- ☑ Minimize water use. Keep lawns at least 10 cm long to minimize irrigation needs and to prevent weed invasions. Allow lawns to go brown during dry seasons. Install rain barrels that capture rain for from your roof, and use this to water flowers and vegetables. Install highly efficient irrigation systems for vegetable gardens (see [www.irrigationbc.com](http://www.irrigationbc.com)).
- ☑ Provide hiding places and food sources for local wildlife in your backyard. Put up bird feeders and nest boxes for birds and bats, and create rock piles where amphibians can hide.
- ☑ Use an enclosed garden compost bin to recycle lawn clippings, leaves and garden trimmings. This will make rich soil for garden plants.
- ☑ Avoid (or minimize) the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, which can harm wildlife and reduce local populations of important pollinators such as bees.
- ☑ Do not throw garden waste down slopes. This can cause the slope to become unstable, leading to slides and damage to your property as well as to fish habitat below.
- ☑ More information on ways to enhance your garden is available at the Naturescape B.C. [www.naturescapebc.ca/](http://www.naturescapebc.ca/) or *The Garry Oak Gardeners Handbook* [www.goert.ca/gardeners](http://www.goert.ca/gardeners).

### SPECIAL FEATURES AND PROTECTED AREAS

If you are lucky enough to have an environmentally valuable feature such as a lake, stream, forest or natural meadow on or near your property, you have a special responsibility to protect the local wildlife and ecosystems and may be subject to a variety of legal requirements.

- ☑ Check your property title for restrictive covenants or conservation covenants. There may be restrictions on

#### For more information see:

*Develop with Care 2014: Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia* and other Guideline documents <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/BMP/bmpintro.html>

**Riparian Areas Regulation:** [http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/habitat/fish\\_protection\\_act/riparian/riparian\\_areas.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/habitat/fish_protection_act/riparian/riparian_areas.html)



Put up bird feeders and nest boxes

your use of specified areas of your property in order to protect local wildlife and ecosystems.

- ☑ Respect buffer areas, which are there to protect the natural values, and should be kept in as natural a state as possible. Do not remove trees or groundcover from areas that have been legally protected (unless for safety reasons and with proper authorizations), and do not use these areas for other purposes such as storage. Keep any fences in good repair.
- ☑ Protect shorelines and waterways. Make sure septic fields are functioning properly. Check with your local government to make sure you are following local bylaws and are in compliance with the Fisheries Act and Riparian Areas Regulation. For more ideas and tips see *Develop with Care* and the Living by Water website (<http://www.bcnature.ca/projects/completed-projects/living-by-water/>).
- ☑ Retain trees and shrubs along shorelines. Shoreline vegetation along lakes, streams and coastal areas provide important habitats for fish, waterfowl, and other wildlife and are protected by a variety of legislation. The natural woody vegetation along streams and lakeshores protects the shoreline from erosion. Replant native vegetation if this has been lost due to previous clearing.