

TWELVE STEPS TO TRANSFORM YARD WASTE INTO YARD WEALTH

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Landscape maintenance is part of every homeowner's routine. Keeping the landscape and lawn neat and green doesn't have to be an overwhelming task if certain steps are followed to recycle much of the yard waste into usable yard wealth. Maybe it's time for you to consider this multi-dimensional, environmentally friendly philosophy of landscape and lawn care.

To begin, cast off that old term, "yard waste". All organic matter, including leaves, grass clippings and yard trimmings can be reused, recycled or even reduced. Recycling as much as possible in your own yard eliminates the need for outside inputs of fertilizers whose excessive use in the suburban landscape can be a source of runoff or non-point source pollution.

Reducing "yard waste" is a method more people are beginning to follow. It is a good way to begin to work with nature, within the confines of your own yard and environment.

The following steps are a few ways that each of us can make a difference recycling yard waste and yard wealth.

Try Natural Landscaping

Naturalize at least a portion of your yard to reduce maintenance, grass clippings, pesticide and fertilizer usage. Enjoy the attractive alternatives as your property contributes to a richer ecosystem.

Landscape the Border of Your Yard

Perimeter plantings provide a convenient place to recycle tree trimmings, leaves, and garden debris. Decomposition is speeded up by cutting twigs and other material into smaller pieces.

Select Plants for Proper Size and Vigor

Reduce trimmings by selecting dwarf varieties and always plan for the mature height of trees and shrubs before planting. Pest-resistant varieties reduce both chemical usage and the dead wood from diseased plants. Match plants to proper climate, soil, light conditions, and topography.

Plant Ground Covers

Reduce impractical lawn areas (steep slopes, shady areas, low spots) and keep tree roots moist and cool. Less lawn means fewer grass clippings. It also can reduce the amount of pesticide and fertilizer use.

Use Organic Mulches

Recycle leaves, wood chips, grass clippings, and other yard trimmings as mulch to retain soil moisture, reduce weed growth, moderate daily and seasonal soil temperatures, and reduce soil erosion.

Use Leaves as a Resource

Small amounts of leaves, when shredded with a lawn mower, can be recycled as an organic nutrient source if left on the lawn. This reduces the frequency of raking. Leaves can also be reused to mulch perimeter plantings or as an ingredient in compost.

Fertilize Conservatively and Carefully

Test the soil and reduce fertilizer use to avoid excessive plant growth, which contributes to potential yard waste. Reuse fertilizer spilled on paved surfaces, which will otherwise pollute lakes and streams via runoff water.

Manage Lawn Areas Wisely

Recycle nutrients by leaving clippings on the lawn where they belong. If you must collect them, reuse the grass clippings as mulch or compost. Proper care keeps lawns growing vigorously, which greatly reduces disease and pesticide use.

Create a Compost Pile or Bin

For yard trimmings with no other use, recycle. Using a recycling bin speeds up the natural process of decomposition. Using a bin has the added advantage of screening the compost from view.

Direct Downspouts into Planting Beds or Lawns

Reduce runoff from downspouts directed onto paved surfaces, which can contribute pollutants to lakes and streams. Redirect this precious natural resource to your yard rather than the pavement.

Collect and Store Rainwater

Reduce storm water flowing into lakes and streams and reuse it during dry periods. This time-tested practice works especially well if you collect from a limited roof area and provide an overflow barrel.

Plan and Evaluate Your Yard

Reconsidering your routines may require a little time and discipline – as opposed to proceeding as usual. But good, environmentally friendly ideas should emerge. The key is to lessen the waste problem in some way by first rethinking, and then reducing, reusing and recycling