

SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING DEFINED: EASY ACTIONS FOR BIG RESULTS

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Photography courtesy of Broccolo Tree and Lawn Care



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Sustainability remains a hot buzzword in landscape architecture and design. Yet everyone still wrangles with its meaning. The American Society of Landscape Architecture's (ASLA) Sustainable Site Initiative offers this definition: sustainability is working with nature, culture, people

and lifestyle while preserving, conserving, and regenerating.

Sustainability has positive implications for your backyard, watershed, ecosystem and wallet. But how does sustainability become reality? It's simple. Take action. There are five areas where you can be the decision-maker. Your home is part of a natural system; actions in one area will affect another:

First, when developing or renovating a site, key sustainability benchmarks assess impact. These include minimal disturbance, compaction, erosion control, equipment use, and emissions. Design to preserve existing soil and natural plantings. The less you disturb now – then prune, water, fertilize, mulch, trim, mow, or blow later – the lighter your impact will be.

Second, every home is waterfront property. How? Everyone lives in a watershed and all landscaping activities affect its health. Storm water management has profound implications to your watershed, via the storm sewers which connect directly to streams and rivers. As water flows off a property it carries toxins picked up along the way. Capture and mimic nature's filtration systems. Plant rain gardens to absorb run-off near roofs and pavement. Use permeable asphalts, concretes and pavers for hardscaping.

Third, riparian corridors are critical interconnected paths of natural cover allowing wildlife to move across developments to access forests and riparian zones (wetlands). Create riparian corridors by establishing vegetation zones along the edge of your property with flowers, fruit, and fall color plantings that require minimal maintenance.



Fourth, traditional building creates summertime heat islands. Strategically placed trees shade buildings while vines on south and west walls cool summer temperatures. Plantings near the edge of driveways and lawns absorb heat radiating off hardscape materials. Green roofing is more dramatic but very effective. Reducing your microclimate's heat saves energy, carbon waste, and money.

Fifth, water conservation is a priority. Use attractive rain barrels to capture run-off. Incorporate gray water systems into your irrigation and capture condensation from air-conditioning units.

These simple suggestions will do more than ease your pocketbook and reduce waste. Improving environmental health improves your health. A greener outside view soothes senses while encouraging more outdoor time. Neighbors are likely to follow your visible example. So ask your landscaper! After all, sustainability is potential health and beauty for all. **DESIGNNY**

