

Is Your Yard a Tennessee Smart Yard?

This is a list of simple actions that can be adopted in home landscaping to benefit both you and our environment. Use this checklist to track your progress towards creating a “Tennessee Smart Yard.” Adopt 36 inches worth of actions, then certify your yard with UT Extension to show how you are helping to keep our Tennessee communities healthy, naturally.

RIGHT PLANT, RIGHT PLACE



- ☐ Determine your family's landscape objectives (e.g., entertainment areas, play areas) and level of maintenance desired. (e.g., extent of mowing) Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Assess yard site conditions (e.g., light availability, soil characteristics, topography, drainage patterns) and incorporate into sketch. Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Sketch your yard including long-term goals. (e.g., space use, aesthetics, level of maintenance) Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Group plants according to site conditions and maintenance needs. Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Remove or avoid using invasive/exotic plants and incorporate native plants. Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Preserve existing vegetation, especially trees, during land disturbance activities. Value: 2 inches

MANAGE SOILS & MULCH



- ☐ Assess and address soil compaction. Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Maintain a 2-3 inch layer of mulch in plant beds and over tree and shrub roots, leaving at least 2 inches of space at the base of trunks. Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Use organic pine straw, pine bark, leaves, or hardwood mulch. Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Protect all soil surfaces with vegetation to minimize erosion by rainfall and runoff. Value: 2 inches

WATER EFFICIENTLY



- ☐ Use rain gauge to help monitor plant water needs; apply about one inch of water per week, taking into account rainfall. Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Use rain barrels to catch rooftop runoff. Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Adjust sprinkler heads to avoid hitting paved surfaces and calibrate the output as directed by plant needs. Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Mow grass high, creating deeper root systems and reducing water needs. Value: 2 inches



REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE



- ☐ Leave grass clippings on lawn. Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Use composted grass clippings, leaves, pruned plant parts, kitchen scraps to improve soils. Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Locate plants to increase home energy efficiency. (e.g., deciduous trees on southwest of house to provide shade) Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Use landscape waste (tree trimmings, fallen leaves, pine needles, etc.) on site. Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Incorporate salvaged materials into landscaping. (e.g., newspaper in garden to suppress weed growth, repurposed wood for trellis) Value: 2 inches

USE FERTILIZER APPROPRIATELY



- ☐ Maintain soil pH in the recommended range. Value: 2 inches
- ☐ Fertilize as recommended by soil test and not in wet weather; use low maintenance plans when available. Value: 2 inches

Actions Continued.

MANAGE YARD PESTS

- ❑ Check for pests regularly to detect and determine problems that require intervention. Value: 2 inches
- ❑ Use mechanical approaches to pest control such as pruning and hand removal. Value: 2 inches
- ❑ Protect beneficial insects that control pests and support pollination. Value: 2 inches
- ❑ Spot treat only affected areas, avoiding routine applications of pesticides. Value: 2 inches
- ❑ Use environmentally-friendly pesticides such as horticultural oils and insecticidal soaps. Value: 2 inches



PROVIDE FOR WILDLIFE

- ❑ Incorporate plants that support habitat needs of desired wildlife. (e.g., provides food, cover, place to raise young) Value: 2 inches
- ❑ Provide a water source. (e.g., bird bath, pond) Value: 2 inches
- ❑ Install bat houses, bird houses, bird feeders, etc. Value: 2 inches



PROTECT WATER'S EDGE

- ❑ Maintain a mix of native trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers along water's edge, creating a vegetated width that is as wide as practical. Value: 2 inches
- ❑ Create "no mow, no fertilizer, no pesticide" zones along waterways. Value: 2 inches



REDUCE STORMWATER RUNOFF & POLLUTANTS

- ❑ Disconnect downspouts, directing them onto a lawn or garden rather than into drainage channels or onto impervious surfaces. Value: 2 inches
- ❑ Build a rain garden to catch and filter stormwater runoff. Value: 3 inches
- ❑ Use permeable surfaces for hardscapes such as driveways, walkways or patios. Value: 3 inches
- ❑ Practice good housekeeping. (e.g., sweep impervious surfaces, "scoop the poop," wash your car on the lawn instead of on your drive) Value: 2 inches



Already taking smart actions?

You have likely already adopted some of these practices. Document those below, see how many more inches you need to reach a smart "yard" (hint: 36 inches), and then pick out those that make sense for you and your space.

Actions Already Taken:

_____ = _____ inches
_____ = _____ inches
_____ = _____ inches
_____ = _____ inches

Future Actions:

After achieving 36 inches of actions, certify your Tennessee Smart Yard with UT Extension at the website and receive your personalized certificate:

<https://tiny.utk.edu/tnsyyardstick>

A certified
Tennessee Smart Yard



TENNESSEE SMART YARDS
tnyards.utk.edu

XXX
Extension Agent
Your County, Tennessee

Certification Date: _____

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