

Pollution Prevention At The Home

Backyard Conservation is Family Fun!



It's great to be able to care for a piece of land! Whether your backyard is a small square of grass or an estate of thousands of acres, you can make the land better. As you do, you can enrich yourself and your family, too!

All land has resources of soil, water, air, plants and wildlife. Conservation means using these resources wisely, while protecting or improving their quality. Many conservation methods are the same for farms, parks and yards. Think of your yard as part of the bigger landscape around you. If each person or family does only a small part to conserve resources on the land they tend, the results add up to a better world!

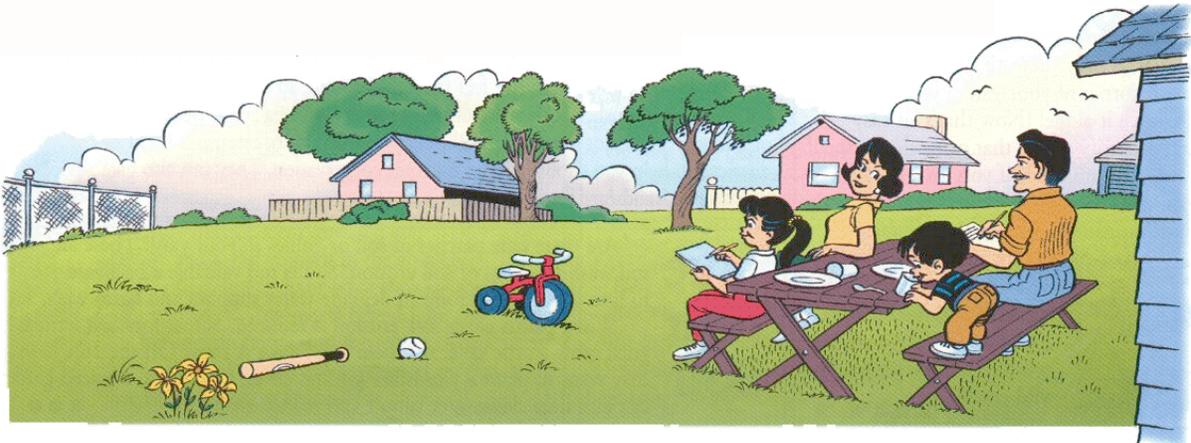
Conservation projects do more than just improve your backyard. As you plan

backyard projects, do them, and enjoy the results, you'll help protect the environment where you live.



Fresh air, sunshine, and exercise are also benefits of backyard projects. Watching wildlife that is attracted to your yard is free entertainment all year!

Backyard conservation projects can involve your family in pollution prevention at it's basic stages. Everyone will learn what types of products to use to prevent insect infestation, promote healthy plant growth and attract wildlife. All while encouraging a "greener" lifestyle!



Have a picnic

Perhaps the best way to begin is to take a good look at your backyard. Have a picnic and survey the scene. Identify the resources in your yard, including soil, water, air, plants and wildlife. Think about how you can improve them. Be realistic and start small, so your family doesn't get discouraged.

Fun Ideas and Activities for Your Family's Backyard

START SMALL

It's easy to get started! Pick a simple project first. Even a small backyard improvement can have big results. For example, plant one tree. The tree will attract and provide habitat for wildlife, offer shade (when it matures) and help prevent water runoff.



ONE WILD CORNER

Many native plants will grow just fine by themselves if they're allowed to do so. Make one small corner of your yard a wild corner. Simply leave it alone! Identify plants that grow there. You'll see flowers, shrubs, and if you leave it long enough, even trees. After several months, you may wish to trim or remove undesirable plants, but remember, any plant that grows there will usually be well-suited to that spot. Observe what wildlife is attracted your this corner.



Go Native

Plants that have grown in an area for a long time, even before people settled there, are called "native." "Introduced" plants are brought into yards from other areas of the world.



Native plants are well-suited for their area. They usually need less water in the summer than introduced plants. Native plants often provide food and shelter for wildlife.

Many introduced plants give little food to wild animals. Some can also become pests, as they compete with native plants

and reduce wildlife food and shelter.

Because of their low maintenance and high conservation value, consider native plants for landscaping. Their value and beauty are making them popular, and many nurseries offer a wide variety. You can also visit a library, garden club or nature center to learn about native plants in your area.

Consider xeriscaping. This is landscaping techniques designed to minimize the need for watering. Contact your county extension agent to find out what kinds of plants, trees and shrubs to use in a xeriscaping project.



ROCKIN' ROCK GARDEN

Is there a spot in your yard which is difficult to maintain as a lawn? Consider making it a rock garden. A rock garden with flowering plants can add a nice accent to your yard while providing habitat for wildlife!

Spot the Wildlife

Make a wildlife checklist on a piece of paper. Have spaces for the names of animals and when and where in your yard they were seen. Put the list where your family can see it and contribute.

Family members can have fun as they identify animals together (don't forget insects!). Discuss what parts of your yard attract different wildlife. You may even want to have a family contest to see who can spot the most wildlife.





Use Bush

Important sources of food and shelter as plants that will help stop water erosion.

Between the ground and tops of trees and shrubs. In fact, birds build nests lower down in bushes and shrubs. You can plant a single decorative bush on your property. These plantings will help slow water

runoff down in your yard. Water that soaks through the soil will provide moisture for the roots of your shrubs, thus, they'll grow healthy and beautiful. A local nursery, extension agent or conservation district can help you choose a good bush for conservation.



A Little Off The Top

A simple way to conserve resources in your backyard is to not cut your grass too short. Grass with enough leaf growth is healthier than grass that is cut too short. It needs much less watering in hot weather. It can resist pests better. It makes stronger roots. And when grass has enough leaf, it doesn't grow so quickly, so you don't have to mow as often.

Sit

back and relax!

Save Your Soil

Are there bare patches of soil or gullies in your yard? These are signs of soil washing away, or soil erosion.

Soil is too valuable a backyard resource to lose. And eroded soil can degrade water supplies and harm water life. When plants cover soil, erosion is reduced. Sometimes just letting grass grow a little taller will help. You may want to plant ivy or other ground cover. On slopes,



terraced gardens can also help slow water runoff and reduce erosion.

Be sure to make time to enjoy

Take A Big Drink

Drinking water is essential for life. Birds need water for bathing and preening, and amphibians mate and lay eggs in water. Some butterfly species use nutrients found in puddles as a food source. Most backyards lack a natural water source. Consider buying or building a bird bath. Making a backyard pond can be fun weekend project (with proper planning). You'll provide a wet place for your animal friends and your family will enjoy the sounds of the moving water!

y your backyard as you conserve resources there. Sit still for a moment, and observe the life around you. Observe how soil, water, air, plants and wildlife interact on the land. Compare the number and kinds of native plants and animals you see with those you saw when you started. Think of other possible projects for the future. And make sure you and your family pat yourselves on the back because you've made a real difference in the world!

Keep Learning, Keep Sharing

This section of the guide is a basic introduction to backyard conservation. Every piece of land is different, with different resource challenges and solutions. To learn more about what works in your area, read and talk with other people. You can find information and helpful, knowledgeable people at places like:

Nature Centers or Wildlife Preserves

See conservation in action as you learn more about native plants and animals. Homeowners. Check the government listing in your phone. Garden Clubs and Nature Clubs. Hear local conversation success stories and learn what will work in your backyard.

Local Chapters of Wildlife Conservation Organizations

Local groups can help you learn about national and local concerns, to deal with conservation challenges in your own community.

Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H or Other Youth Groups

Children can get involved in conservation projects, they make friends and learn cooperation.

Nurseries and Garden Centers

They can suggest and provide trees, shrubs, and flowers that work well in your climate, soil and lifestyle, and provide wildlife food and habitat. They can help you solve problems you may face in your backyard, like controlling pests or plant disease.

Your Public Library

They have books, pamphlets, and even videos. Ask a librarian - they're glad to help!

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