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### Fall is for Planting... and Planning

You've heard the adage - fall is for planting! Well, it is true. The soil is still warm from summer's heat, yet the cool night-time dew keeps plants hydrated.

Fall is also the perfect time to assess your yard - which plants thrived and which didn't, which need to be transplanted, etc... It's also the perfect time to assess the time spent maintaining your yard.

We have suggestions to transform your yard into an easy care oasis that doesn't require much water (saving you money), care (saving you time) or chemicals (saving the environment and your family's health).

Happy planting and planning this fall!

Debbie Cook  
Greenscapes Editor



It's all about the lawn, or is it? Beautiful lawns are coveted in our society, but what a time and money sink they can be.

Fortunately there are types of grass that are MUCH easier to care for than the traditional Kentucky blue grass blends.

### Choosing easy care grass seed

A blend of native turf-type tall fescues are a great choice for easy care. Great [fescue seed](#) blends are produced by the Massachusetts Nursery and Landscape Association, and many of our [partnering nurseries](#) carry the seeds. You can also purchase [Pearl's Premium grass seed](#) from the North and South Rivers Watershed Association.

The perfect time to put in a new lawn or overseed your old lawn with the fescues is now until mid-October. Most weeds don't germinate in the fall, but grass seed flourishes. You'll reap the benefits next summer!

### Cutting down on lawn

Two options exist to reduce your lawn size:

- a. hardscape solutions, such as using [permeable pavers](#) to create a patio or walkway that

let the water seep through the paving stones, recharging the ground water  
b. softscape solutions that utilize [native, drought-tolerant plants](#) to fill in sections of grass

Planning your garden or naturalized area

Do you want a garden or a naturalized area? A naturalized area, once planted, is basically left to fill in on its own. You can 'seed' the garden with plants that attract wildlife, are visually interesting, and even have color all season, such as the [red twigged dogwood](#), by [American Beauties](#).



A garden, of course, requires a little more work, but gives so much pleasure. By planning now you can have color in your garden all next growing season. One of our Greenscapes consultants, [Risa Edelstein](#), illustrates in her [blog](#), how she planned for showy fall colors.

### Free Garden Design Templates.

"Water Smart" program offers free landscape templates designed by local landscape professionals.

#### [Woodland Shade Garden \(for landscapes abutting woodlands\)](#)

- [Wildlife Attracting Landscape](#)

*American Beauty Designs. The National Wildlife Federation's "American Beauties" program, in conjunction with native plant and wildlife experts, designed four garden plans.*

- [Bird Garden](#)
- [Butterfly Garden](#)
- [Dry Shade Garden](#)
- [Moist Sun Garden](#)



#### Is water a problem?

As you survey your property, do you have any low-lying areas that collect water and then the water evaporates away, leaving a muddy mess? Or do you have rivulets of water that are eroding little gullies in your lawn?

One easy solution that is aesthetically pleasing and easy to care for, is a rain garden. [Learn how to create a rain garden](#), including which plants to include.

### Planning for healthy soil

Healthy soil, full of nutrients and microbes, is essential for optimum plant growth. A key ingredient of good, rich soil is [compost](#), fertile with organic matter. Fall is the perfect time to set up your compost bin, because compost is most efficiently created with a combination of brown material - decomposing leaves. and green material, such as vegetable parings.

You can either [build your own compost bin](#), or [buy one](#). Either way, you'll be creating your own supply of this black gold.

#### Harvard University's Experience with Compost and Going Organic

As an experiment, Harvard University tested organic methods, including composting, on a small patch of grass. They were 'astounded' at the results, and now plan to use organic methods on over 80 acres. Read how skeptics at Harvard became thoroughly [convinced](#) of the benefits of composting and going organic!

#### Greenscapes News from Our Partners

[The Ipswich River Watershed Association](#), has [transformed its riverfront property](#) into a low maintenance, water-saving, ecologically healthy environment, using decidedly low-tech, inexpensive ideas. <http://www.ipswichriver.org/about/riverbend.htm>

[The North and South River Watershed Association](#) has been organizing field trips for 5th graders to the water and sewage treatment plants in their towns, so the kids will understand the complexity of the water cycle and how much effort goes into treating and transporting the water that flows from their taps.

[The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission](#) announces the recent completion of the third demonstration native plant garden at [Wistariahurst Museum](#) in Holyoke. Plants donated by [American Beauties](#) were used as part of the museum's efforts to restore the gardens at the museum, first planted by Belle Skinner in the early 1900s.

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