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### **Fall is the Best Time For Planting**

Now that summer is unofficially over, take a moment to think about your landscape. Did you spend more time and money maintaining your lawn this summer than you care to remember? Surely lawn maintenance isn't among your favorite summer memories.

Considering this was one of the driest summers on record, many of us are probably quite fed up with our lawns. Is there an unwanted, unnecessary, or unattractive section of lawn that could be replaced with low-maintenance plants? If so, we have great news -- now is the best time to replace some of that lawn with something more beautiful!

Mid-September (six weeks before the first hard frost) is the optimum time for planting perennials, trees and shrubs because there is usually more rainfall,

fewer pest and disease problems, and the soil is still warm, thus encouraging strong root growth. These well-established roots will make your new plants far better equipped for next summer's heat and drought. Plus many nurseries are now offering great discounts, which makes fall planting good for your wallet, too!

We hope this issue of the Greenscapes e-newsletter will inspire you to take advantage of the fall season and get planting! Keep reading for ideas on what, where, and how to plant, as well as some great online resources for free design templates. Please [send us a picture](#) of your new Greenscapes planting bed and we'll share it on our website.

Enjoy the fall and have fun planting!

~ [Wendy Garpow](#), Greenscapes Massachusetts  
Assistant Director, Massachusetts Bays Estuary Association

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### **Watering Restrictions**

Last month was Massachusetts' second driest August in more than a century. Boston received only 0.66 inches of rainfall last month, 2.7 inches below normal. Leaves are falling early, rivers and streams are running dry, more than 50 brushfires have been reported in the region, and fall harvests are in jeopardy. See related stories recently printed in the [Boston Globe \(9/6/07\)](#), [Patriot Ledger \(great video! 8/31/07\)](#), and [Mariner Newspapers \(9/13/07\)](#).

Many municipalities have implemented voluntary or mandatory watering bans to ensure there is enough water for drinking and fire protection. [Find out if your town has issued a ban by checking our website!](#) Remember, people are more important than lawns -- be sure to comply with all watering restrictions, even if you have a private well.

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### **Upcoming Workshop**

Simple Steps Toward Organic Lawn Care for the Homeowner  
Saturday, September 22nd, 9:00-11:00 am  
Presented by Marblehead's Award-Winning Living Lawn Project

- Pre-Registration by calling 781-639-2467 or [www.livinglawn.org](http://www.livinglawn.org)
  - Presenters: Chip Osborne and Gina Field
  - Marblehead Community Center, 10 Humphrey St., Marblehead, MA
  - A \$20 donation to Living Lawn Project will be collected at the door.
  - Participants will receive a free copy of class notes.
  - Coffee and light breakfast will be provided.
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### **Where to Plant**

Chances are there are parts of your lawn that are giving you headaches, or

perhaps parts that you really don't see or want in the first place. Sections of your lawn that might be better as something other than grass include areas where:

- weeds are taking over;
- the grass just won't survive, such as on a hill or shady spots;
- you can't see, such as behind the garage;
- it's really tough to take care of, such as on a slope, against the house, along a fence, or at the base of trees;
- you need privacy, such as the sides of the back yard; and/or
- you want more color and interest, such as opposite your favorite window.

Isn't there at least one part of your lawn that would be a better planting bed instead?

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### **What to Plant**

Almost any plant is easier to maintain than grass, especially groundcovers, shrubs, trees and some perennial flowers. Before selecting plants, evaluate the prevailing conditions in the area of your new planting bed (hot/sunny, cool/shady, moist/dry). Then browse these resources below to help you select the best plants for you:

- [Greenscapes Low Maintenance plant list](#) (visit a [participating nursery](#) and receive 15% off these plants.)
- [Native Plants Searchable Database](#) (American Beauties)
- [Drought Tolerant Perennials Plant List](#) (UMass Cooperative Extension)
- [Drought Tolerant Plants for the Landscape](#) (Cape Cod and Plymouth County Cooperative Extension)

Note: Certain trees are more susceptible to winter damage and could be better off if planted in the spring, including magnolia, dogwood, tuliptree, sweet gum, red maple, birch, hawthorn, poplars, cherries, plum and many of the oaks. Ask your local nursery to be sure.

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### **Free Design Templates**

Need some help arranging your favorite plants into a beautiful planting bed? Check out these free templates and design plans that use low maintenance and/or native plants. Use them as a guide for your own property and implement as your budget and time allow.

**Water Smart Templates.** The Town of Concord's "[Water Smart](#)" program offers free landscape templates designed by local landscape professionals to help you create a low-maintenance landscape. These Water-Smart templates were funded in part from grants from the Concord Garden Club and the MA Dept. of Environmental Protection.

- [Garden for Hot Spots \(for full-sun areas\)](#)
- [Woodland Shade Garden \(for landscapes abutting woodlands\)](#)
- [Rain Catching Garden](#)
- [Wildlife Attracting Landscape](#)

**American Beauty Designs.** The National Wildlife Federation’s “American Beauties” program makes it easy to use attractive trees, shrubs, and wildflowers that are good for wildlife. These four garden plans were designed by native plant and wildlife experts, and will provide food and habitat for birds, butterflies, and other animals.

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

**Rain Gardens.** A rain garden is a bowl-shaped garden bed designed to collect and absorb runoff from a roof or parking lot. Rain gardens are constructed by filling a basin in a low-lying area with a special soil blend, hearty plants, mulch and sometimes a layer of gravel. For specific instructions on creating a rain garden, as well as a sample plan and list of plants, see the [Rain Garden Chapter of the Greenscapes Guide](#). For more designs and information, check out:

- [Raingardens](#) (Prepared by GeoSyntec Consultants)
- [Rain Catching Garden \(Concord’s Water Smart Program\)](#)
- [7 Raingarden plans from the City of Maplewood MN](#)

## **How to Plant**

Creating planting beds isn’t back-breaking work. Just follow these simple steps:

1. Lay out the bed’s shape with a garden hose. Curves look great and are easy to mow around.
2. Paint along the line with “athletic field” paint and remove the hose.
3. Cut and dig a new edge 4” deep and 6” wide along the painted line.
4. Remove the grass inside the edge with a shallow spade (put the unwanted turf in your compost bin) or you can slowly kill it by covering with a sheet of plastic for several weeks.
5. Plant as directed, mixing compost with the soil.
6. Add 2-4 inches of mulch to help retain moisture and regulate temperature.
7. Water the new plants as instructed, until they are well established.

## **Get Your Plants Ready For Winter**

Once you’ve gotten your plants in the ground, they will need a little TLC to get

them through the winter (it's right around the corner!).

- Water plants thoroughly when needed to supply about 1 inch of water per week. Continue watering until the ground is frozen, even after deciduous plants have lost their leaves.
- Be sure to add a 2-4 inch layer of mulch to retain moisture and provide insulation.
- Wrap the trunks of young trees in late November to protect from frost and animals, but be sure to remove the wrap in the early spring.

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### The Greenscapes Coalition

The 2007 Greenscapes program is a multi-partner outreach effort sponsored by the [Massachusetts Bay Estuary Association](#), [Massachusetts Bays Program](#), [North and South Rivers Watershed Association](#), [Eight Towns & the Bay Committee](#), [Salem Sound Coastwatch](#), [Ipswich River Watershed Association](#), and many other [sponsors](#) and [supporters](#). Participating communities in the 2007 Greenscapes program include: Andover, Beverly, Boxford, Cohasset, Danvers, Duxbury, Essex, Georgetown, Gloucester, Hamilton, Hanover, Hingham and Hull (Aquarion Water Company), Ipswich, Kingston, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Marshfield, Middleton, Newbury, Newburyport, Norwell, Peabody, Pembroke, Pinehills Water Company (Plymouth), Plymouth, Rowley, Salem, Salisbury, Scituate, Topsfield, Wenham and Weymouth. Coalition partners have also received generous grant assistance for the 2007 program from the [EPA Targeted Watershed Grant for Ipswich River Restoration](#), the Louisa Conrad Bequest of the North Shore Garden Club, MA Department of Environmental Protection, Massachusetts Environmental Trust, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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