

PASQUE ECOLOGICAL DESIGN

BLOOMINGTON, MN | 612 868-8033 | PASQUEDESIGN@GMAIL.COM

CONVERTING LAWN TO NATIVE PLANT LANDSCAPES: BASIC STEPS



I. DESIGN

- A. Make a base map, including paths, pavement, turf, water flow, downspouts, topography, benches, buildings, existing plants, views, impacts on sun exposure and water flow from neighboring properties, overhead and underground utilities, favorite seating areas.
- B. Analyze your site:
 1. Amount of sun exposure
 2. Soil: texture, organic matter content, nutrient content, pH, compaction
 3. How does water flow across your yard?
 4. Where do you need access?
 5. Views
 6. How do you use your yard?
- C. Analyze your site's opportunities and constraints: site and cultural, including codes and regulations
- D. Set goals
 1. Consider how you would like to use your yard
 - a. How much lawn do you really need? Where? (consider using no mow lawn in these areas where feasible)
 - b. Would you like gathering areas, paths, edible gardens, water features, labyrinth, areas for active recreation, etc?
 2. Dream big, start small
- E. For inspiration
 1. Visit local natural areas, use these as "templates"
 - a. Potential resources:
 - i. Scientific and Natural areas:
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/snas/index.html>
 - ii. Minnesota Biological Survey Native Plant Community and Rare Species County Maps:
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/mcbs/maps.html>
 - b. Observe:
 - i. Presence, percent cover, and growing patterns of species present
 - ii. Spatial and aesthetic characteristics
 - iii. Other notable characteristics
 2. Visit other native plant gardens
 3. Look at books, magazines, and websites
- F. Develop a plan

See reverse

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II. INSTALLATION

A. Site preparation

1. Thorough elimination of turf and other weeds is key before planting:
 - a. Solarization
 - b. Paper and mulch
 - c. Herbicide
 - d. Physically remove turf

B. Planting and/or seeding

1. Use local ecotypes whenever possible
2. Cut off girdling roots before planting
3. Use paper and mulch, erosion control blanket, or another technique to minimize weed invasion
4. Provide erosion control on steep slopes
5. Install edging between remaining turf and native plants to keep turf out of native plantings (steel, stone, etc)
6. Protect plants from herbivores

III. MAINTENANCE:

See maintenance chapter in *Beautifully Sustainable: Freeing Yourself to Enjoy Your Landscape*, 2013.
Douglas Owens-Pike

IV. SHARE/EDUCATE:

Let your neighbors know what you are doing and why

"Increasing the percentage of natives in suburbia is a grassroots solution to the extinction crisis. To succeed, we do not need to invoke government action; we do not need to purchase large tracts of pristine habitat that no longer exist; we do not need to limit ourselves to sending money to national and international organizations and hoping it will be used productively. Our success is up to each one of us individually. We can each make a measurable difference almost immediately by planting a native nearby. As gardeners and stewards of our land, we have never been so empowered—and the ecological stakes have never been so high."

Douglas Tallamy, *Bringing Nature Home*

