

S411 BMPs for Landscaping and Lawn / Vegetation Management

Description of Pollutant Sources: Landscaping can include grading, soil transfer, vegetation planting, and vegetation removal. Examples include weed control on golf course lawns, access roads, and utility corridors and during landscaping; and residential lawn/plant care. Proper management of vegetation can minimize excess nutrients and pesticides.

Pollutant Control Approach: Maintain appropriate vegetation to control erosion and the discharge of stormwater pollutants. Prevent debris contamination of stormwater. Where practicable, grow plant species appropriate for the site, or adjust the soil properties of the site to grow desired plant species.

Applicable BMPs:

- Install engineered soil/landscape systems to improve the infiltration and regulation of stormwater in landscaped areas.
- Select the right plants for the planting location based on proposed use, available maintenance, soil conditions, sun exposure, water availability, height, sight factors, and space available.
- Ensure that plants selected for planting are not on the noxious weed list. For example, butterfly bush often gets planted as an ornamental but is actually on the noxious weed list.

The Washington State Noxious Weed List can be found at the following webpage:

<https://www.nwcb.wa.gov/printable-noxious-weed-list>

- Do not dispose of collected vegetation into waterways or storm sewer systems.
- Do not blow vegetation or other debris into the drainage system.
- Dispose of collected vegetation such as grass clippings, leaves, sticks by composting or recycling.
- Remove, bag, and dispose of class A & B noxious weeds in the garbage immediately.
- Do not compost noxious weeds as it may lead to spreading through seed or fragment if the composting process is not hot enough.
- Use manual and/or mechanical methods of vegetation removal (pincer-type weeding tools, flame weeders, or hot water weeders as appropriate) rather than applying herbicides, where practical.
- Use at least an eight-inch "topsoil" layer with at least 8 percent organic matter to provide a sufficient vegetation-growing medium.
 - Organic matter is the least water-soluble form of nutrients that can be added to the soil. Composted organic matter generally releases only between 2 and 10 percent of its total nitrogen annually, and this release corresponds closely to the plant growth cycle. Return natural plant debris and mulch to the soil, to continue recycling nutrients indefinitely.
- Select the appropriate turfgrass mixture for the climate and soil type.
 - Certain tall fescues and rye grasses resist insect attack because the symbiotic endophytic fungi found naturally in their tissues repel or kill common leaf and stem-eating lawn insects.

- The fungus causes no known adverse effects to the host plant or to humans.
- Tall fescues and rye grasses do not repel root-feeding lawn pests such as Crane Fly larvae.
- Tall fescues and rye grasses are toxic to ruminants such as cattle and sheep
- Endophytic grasses are commercially available; use them in areas such as parks or golf courses where grazing does not occur.
- Local agricultural or gardening resources such as Washington State University Extension office can offer advice on which types of grass are best suited to the area and soil type.
- Use the following seeding and planting BMPs, or equivalent BMPs, to obtain information on grass mixtures, temporary and permanent seeding procedures, maintenance of a recently planted area, and fertilizer application rates: [BMP C120: Temporary and Permanent Seeding](#), [BMP C121: Mulching](#), [BMP C123: Plastic Covering](#), and [BMP C124: Sodding](#).
- Adjusting the soil properties of the subject site can assist in selection of desired plant species. Consult a soil restoration specialist for site-specific conditions.

Recommended Additional BMPs:

- Conduct mulch-mowing whenever practicable.
- Use native plants in landscaping. Native plants do not require extensive fertilizer or pesticide applications. Native plants may also require less watering.
- Use mulch or other erosion control measures on soils exposed for more than one week during the dry season (May 1 to September 30) or two days during the rainy season (October 1 to April 30).
- Till a topsoil mix or composted organic material into the soil to create a well-mixed transition layer that encourages deeper root systems and drought-resistant plants.
- Apply an annual topdressing application of 3/8" compost. Amending existing landscapes and turf systems by increasing the percent organic matter and depth of topsoil can:
 - Substantially improve the permeability of the soil.
 - Increase the disease and drought resistance of the vegetation.
 - Reduces the demand for fertilizers and pesticides.
- Disinfect gardening tools after pruning diseased plants to prevent the spread of disease.
- Prune trees and shrubs in a manner appropriate for each species.
- If specific plants have a high mortality rate, assess the cause and replace with another more appropriate species.
- When working around and below mature trees, follow the most current American National Standards Institute (ANSI) ANSI A300 standards (see http://www.tcia.org/TCIA/BUSINESS/ANSI_A300_Standards_/TCIA/BUSINESS/A300_Standards/A300_Standards.aspx?hkey=202ff566-4364-4686-b7c1-2a365af59669) and International Society of Arboriculture BMPs to the extent practicable (e.g., take care to minimize any damage to tree roots and avoid compaction of soil).
- Monitor tree support systems (stakes, guys, etc.).

- Repair and adjust as needed to provide support and prevent tree damage.
- Remove tree supports after one growing season or maximum of 1 year.
- Backfill stake holes after removal.
- When continued, regular pruning (more than one time during the growing season) is required to maintain visual sight lines for safety or clearance along a walk or drive, consider relocating the plant to a more appropriate location.
- Make reasonable attempts to remove and dispose of class C noxious weeds.
- Re-seed bare turf areas until the vegetation fully covers the ground surface.
- Watch for and respond to new occurrences of especially aggressive weeds such as Himalayan blackberry, Japanese knotweed, morning glory, English ivy, and reed canary grass to avoid invasions.
- Plant and protect trees per [BMP T5.16: Tree Retention and Tree Planting](#).
- Aerate lawns regularly in areas of heavy use where the soil tends to become compacted. Conduct aeration while the grasses in the lawn are growing most vigorously. Remove layers of thatch greater than ¾-inch deep.
- Set the mowing height at the highest acceptable level and mow at times and intervals designed to minimize stress on the turf. Generally mowing only 1/3 of the grass blade height will prevent stressing the turf.
 - Mowing is a stress-creating activity for turfgrass.
 - Grass decreases its productivity when mowed too short and there is less growth of roots and rhizomes. The turf becomes less tolerant of environmental stresses, more disease prone and more reliant on outside means such as pesticides, fertilizers, and irrigation to remain healthy.

Additional BMP Information:

- King County's *Best Management Practices for Golf Course Development and Operation* ([King County, 1993](#)) has additional BMPs for Turfgrass Maintenance and Operation.
- King County, Seattle Public Utilities, and the Saving Water Partnership have created the following natural lawn and garden care resources that include guidance on building healthy soil with compost and mulch, selecting appropriate plants, watering, using alternatives to pesticides, and implementing natural lawn care techniques.
 - *Natural Yard Care - Five steps to make your piece of the planet a healthier place to live* ([King County and SPU, 2008](#))
 - *The Natural Lawn & Garden Series: Smart Watering* ([Saving Water Partnership, 2006](#))
 - *Natural Lawn Care for Western Washington* ([Saving Water Partnership, 2007](#))
 - *The Natural Lawn & Garden Series: Growing Healthy Soil; Choosing the Right Plants; and Natural Pest, Weed and Disease Control* ([Saving Water Partnership, 2012](#))
- The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) is a group that promotes the professional practice of arboriculture and fosters a greater worldwide awareness of the benefits of trees through research, technology, and education. ISA standards used for managing trees, shrubs, and other woody plants are the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300 standards. The ANSI A300 standards are voluntary industry consensus standards developed by the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) and written by the Accredited Standards Committee (ASC). The ANSI standards can be found on the ISA website: www.isa-arbor.com/education/publications/index.aspx

- Washington State University's *Gardening in Washington State* website at <http://gardening.wsu.edu> contains Washington State specific information about vegetation management based on the type of landscape.
- See the *Pacific Northwest Plant Disease Management Handbook* ([Pscheidt and Ocamb, 2016](#)) for information on disease recognition and for additional resources.

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