



NATURAL LANDSCAPING

Try Landscaping Nature's Way

WATER USE IN SPOKANE

A typical Spokane home uses water at around **twice the national average**. A large portion of this water goes to maintaining our lush green lawns and landscaping. Sixty percent of water use in the west goes to water lawns!

What does our watering of large expanses of turf grass mean to us in Spokane? It means a lowering of water in the Spokane Valley/Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer, where our water comes from. This leads to a drop in the level of the Spokane River, because the aquifer adds water to the river. Less water in the river contributes to violation of water quality standards (less water to dilute the pollution) and also contributes to poor water quality and algae blooms in Spokane (Long) Lake.

The typical Spokane landscape with the ideal lush green lawn, accented with water loving exotic plants, is **unsustainable**. We need to keep in mind that we live in a semi-desert that receives about 17 inches of precipitation per year. Yet the lawns we maintain need 50 inches of water or more to stay green during the growing season. They also require heavy application of expensive fertilizers and harmful **pesticides** produced from natural gas and oil.

So not only are our lawns a huge consumer of water, they also contribute to air and water pollution.

When we water our lawns they grow, then of course, need mowing. USEPA estimates that a gasoline-powered lawn mower emits 11 times the air pollution of a new car for each hour of operation. Mowers consume approximately 580 million gallons of gasoline per year! Overall, mowers, leaf blowers, weed-wackers and other lawn and garden power tools account for 5% of U.S. air pollution. (USEPA)

70 MILLION POUNDS OF PESTICIDES ARE USED ON 20 MILLIONS ACRES OF LAWN IN AMERICA!

Many tons of pesticides and fertilizers are used on lawns in Spokane County. Pesticide use can be twenty times higher than the rates used on agricultural land. Where do these potentially harmful chemicals end up? Some get washed off of lawns and end up in our stormwater swales or drywells and can eventually end up in the Aquifer. In some areas of Spokane they can run off directly into the Spokane River. A study in the Puget Sound area found 23 pesticides in runoff (U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet 097-99



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April 1999). Children, adults and pets can track pesticides into our houses. Preliminary research shows widespread presence of pesticide residue in homes, with up to a dozen different pesticides found in the air inside houses. In a recent University of Washington study, all but one of 96 pre-school children tested had pesticides in their systems.

Is our obsession with the perfect green lawn worth the environmental cost of air and water pollution?

NATURAL LANDSCAPING, (or naturescaping) can address these problems.

Natural landscaping is landscaping using water conserving native plants or locally adapted plants, keeping natural landscapes and ecology in mind.

It involves planting native plants as you would find them in nature, each placed in the landscape in the same habitat or microenvironment as they would be in nature.

These landscapes use much less water, do not need fertilizers, should never need pesticides and requires far less maintenance than traditional landscaping.

Lawn areas in a naturescape are kept to a minimum. New dry site turf grass mixes are available for our area that, once established, require very little additional water, mowing about once per month, and absolutely no additional fertilizing.

Natural landscaping has many benefits:

- ❑ Native plants are local to the area, adapted to our climate and can thrive without additional water, fertilizers and chemical application.
- ❑ Most native plants do extremely well in a landscape setting where competition with other plants is not as great as in the wild.
- ❑ Not requiring chemical pesticides and fertilizers eliminates sources of pollution, saves money and lowers maintenance.
- ❑ Important wildlife habitat is created, allowing wildlife to return to urbanized areas. When enough yards are naturescaped, import wildlife corridors will be established.

In a nutshell, natural landscaping is easy on the environment, provides wildlife habitat, eliminates much of the typical landscape maintenance, saves water, reduces pollution and save money.

