



# Best Practices for Parish Grounds

Parishes are encouraged to undertake practices on their grounds that are of benefit to creation and their community while minimizing their carbon footprint; reducing the use of fossil fuels and eliminating the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. We invite you to consider the following actions as a way of sustainably caring for your parish's corner of creation.

## Lawns

Lawns by their very nature require significant effort and energy to maintain. This includes cutting, usually with fossil fuelled mowers, fertilizing, and applying pesticides; all of which have a detrimental effect on the environment. Reduce lawn area by planting low maintenance (for example, drought tolerant, slow growing) ground cover over as much area as feasible, or even plant vegetable gardens in appropriate areas. Practice grass-cycling, that is, not collect clippings but let them decompose *in situ*, which helps maintain soil nutrients and reduce the need for watering. This process benefits the lawn and reduces the negative effect on the environment. Consider cutting your grass high, 6 or 7 cm. The benefit is a healthier lawn that requires less water.

It's always a good rule of thumb to use as little fertilizer as possible, and to use an environmentally responsible option such as organic fertilizers (manure, compost). Rake up leaves to use as mulch around the garden providing soil enhancing at minimal cost. Parishes should avoid the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides as these are potent substances that can pose threats to our health and environment, especially if they are not used properly.

## Gardens & Trees

Plant native species of plants and trees which are more adapted to local climate. This can reduce the life-cycle energy input of the plants, reduce maintenance, and encourages the continued support of local native diversity of plants. By planting perennials, you have less effort on site and reduce the yearly dependence on fossil fuels in starting new plants in greenhouses.

To help heating and cooling of buildings, plant coniferous trees on northern exposures and deciduous on southern exposures, and thereby reducing energy usage. Plant fruit trees and encourage harvesting fruit for local food banks. This is an opportunity to transform an ornamental treed area into a productive one at minimal cost. Putting up bird nesting boxes is another way of using your space well by encouraging diversity of species on the property and enhancing beauty.

## Watering

Be mindful of recent weather patterns to avoid watering unnecessarily. When and where needed, water deeply and less frequently, and in the early morning especially if a timer is available (for example 2 to 3 cm once per week is better than lesser amounts more frequently). This practice encourages good root development and minimizes water use.

Use rain barrels to collect water from downspouts to water your gardens during dry-spells. City Farmer is a good resource for information on rain barrels and composting. Visit their website: [www.cityfarmer.org](http://www.cityfarmer.org). Runoff from roofs (and other impermeable surfaces) greatly aggravates the natural hydrological cycle and increases the need for energy intense storm water runoff systems.

## Equipment

Apart from elbow grease, much of the equipment we use on our properties - including lawnmowers, tillers and trimmers - is gas-powered. Running an old gas powered piece of equipment such as a trimmer for an hour can create as much pollution as driving your car 500 km. To avoid this, rake up the leaves instead of using a leaf blower where practical to eliminate fossil fuel use in this activity. You may also consider switching from gas-powered to a non-motored push mower where practical or to electric equipment to reduce fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions.

