

Yard, Garden and Public Green Space: Human-Plant Relations



Seven ways to literally make Rhode Island greener



- Plant and nurture shade trees to cool your house and yard
- Convert grass lawns to native plant beds and ground covers
- Grow fruits, vegetables and herbs among your flowers
- Use a push mower instead of a power mower and shears instead of a weed whacker
- Offer to help your neighbors in their gardens, and ask for help in yours
- Tend a plot in a community garden, or join a Friends group for your city or town park
- Vote yes on ballot measures, and support budget initiatives, that provide for the creation and maintenance of city and town parks

We can work with our plant neighbors to slow down climate change. Those of us with yards or gardens find in them a connection with the ecosystems where we live. Those of us who live in cities may find that connection in our nearby parks.

Household action: Plant and nurture shade trees to cool your house and yard and reduce the need for air conditioning in summer—as much as a 20-degree difference! Find hardy native tree choices such as dogwood, cherry and birch for the sunny/southern side of your house. Conifers like eastern red cedar or white and red pine provide a windbreak on the northern side year-round. Converting grass lawns to native groundcovers, beds of native perennials, and walks or patios of stone or wood can reduce or even eliminate the use of mowers, pesticides and fertilizers. See the “Compost, Grease Recycling and Food Waste” section for more about composting your food scraps for fertilizer.

There are lawn and garden practices that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions—especially those that use gas-powered equipment. But many gardening practices actively help manage greenhouse gases, support the local ecosystem and improve quality of life for people nearby. Planting trees on city streets filters air, cools sidewalks, and absorbs climate-warming carbon dioxide. City and town parks with trees and grass do the same, and allow people to get outdoors and meet each other.

□Community: Support, by volunteering or donation, programs like Lots of Hope, which helps community groups transform vacant lots into spaces to grow food, and tree-planting initiatives and park-maintaining groups in your city or town.