MASSACHUSETTS BAR ASSOCIATION

GREEN GUIDELINES
Landscape Management

The Massachusetts Bar Association has created these GREEN GUIDELINES to assist lawyers to:

Assess current environmental practices.

Commit to adopting more sustainable practices.

Tread more lightly on the Earth.

Sustainable practices are defined as using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged.

The **MBA Energy and Environment Task Force** recognizes that each lawyer's ability to implement these **MBA GREEN GUIDELINES, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT,** may depend on a number of factors. Some may have a greater ability to implement these guidelines than others and some may be able to institute measures that go far beyond the scope of the **MBA GREEN GUIDELINES, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT**. We encourage everyone to use their **BEST EFFORTS** to implement the **MBA GREEN GUIDELINES, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT,** to the extent reasonably feasible and make them your own. Inspiring and educating yourself and others will ensure environmentally sustainable practices. Thank you for your participation. Together, we will make a difference.

ECO-CHALLENGE PARTNERS

1. Designate one person in your organization as the environmental liaison.
2. Adopt and implement the **MBA GREEN GUIDELINES, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT**. Make them your sustainability policy or customize them to your practice.
3. Educate all employees about the policy and integrate it into new employee training.
4. Educate attorneys with whom you share office space about these **MBA GREEN GUIDELINES, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT**.
5. Implement a check system that regularly monitors this policy.
6. Encourage your landlord to review his or her sustainable practices.
7. Review your pledge and consider enhancing your commitment at the beginning of each calendar year.

As an **Eco-Challenge Partner**, action is needed in the following areas:

- Go Natural
- Thoughtful Lawn Care
  - Mowing
  - Watering
  - Pollution
  - Fertilizers
  - Lighting
  - Soil and Planting

Visit **MassBar.org/ECOChallenge** for more information.

ECO CHALLENGE MBA
ONE PLANET ONE PLEDGE

CLF Protecting New England's Environment

GO NATURAL

To the extent possible, it is environmentally preferable to move away from traditional lawns and instead plant native local plants. Creative planting of indigenous plants can provide an attractive — and comparatively low-maintenance — alternative to a lawn.

- When landscaping, select native plants. They require much lower maintenance than exotic plants and are great water savers. Select plants that provide food or shelter for animals.
- Choose grasses that require less water and don't grow as high, such as pure tall fescue. Because it is one of the most drought-tolerant species, it can be watered infrequently.
- Whenever possible, eliminate invasive plants before they become out of control.
- Compost food and yard waste to use as an organic fertilizer or mulch for lawns and gardens.
- Create your own organic food garden. Especially in urban areas or in close proximity to buildings, be sure to test your soil for contaminants such as heavy metals before you grow edible produce.
- Always purchase nursery propagated and grown native plants. Never remove plants from the wild.
- For help with developing an organic lawn, visit the following sites:
  - **Toxic Use Reduction Institute at U. Mass. Lowell**
    www.HealthyLawnsforHealthyFamilies.org
  - **Northeast Organic Farming Association**
    www.NOFAmass.org
  - **Ecological Landscaping Association**
    www.ECOLandscaping.org
  - **Organic Land Care Committee of Connecticut and Massachusetts**
    www.OrganicLandCare.net
- Learn about and buy native plants at the **Boston Natural Areas Network**, which operates a native plant nursery and horticultural learning center. www.bostonnatural.org/citynativesnursery.htm
- Consult the "Native Plants Brochure" prepared by the **Great Lakes National Program Office of the Environmental Protection Agency**. www.EPA.gov/greenacres/navland.html
- If you do not handle your own landscaping, ask your lawn care provider to do their best to follow these **Green Guidelines, Landscape Management.**

Why Take Action?

At least 4,000 species of non-native plants occur outside cultivation in the United States. Most cause few problems, but 79 species cost the U.S. economy more than $97 billion annually in lost crops, failed recovery efforts for endangered species and control efforts, according to the New England Wild Flower Society.

THOUGHTFUL LAWN CARE

If you do wish to maintain a lawn, there are several steps you can take to make your lawn as green as possible:

Mowing:

- Do not mow on a schedule. Wait until grass is between 4" to 5" high.
- Set your mower as high as it will go (3" to 4"). Tall grass will shade weeds and aid in their destruction. Short grass is more vulnerable to disease and pests.
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn. They add organic matter and nutrients that leach back into soil.
- Where possible, use a push mower. Gas-powered mowers contribute to air and noise pollution, including greenhouse gas emissions. If necessary, choose cleaner alternatives, such as electric or battery-powered mowers.

Why Take Action?

One hour of mowing is the equivalent of driving 350 miles in terms of volatile organic compounds, according to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency statistics.

Watering:

- Water only when your grass shows signs of drought stress. Grass will start to curl before it turns brown, at which time it is the best time to water. Note that a brown lawn in mid-summer is not a dying lawn, just a resting lawn during its semi-dormant state.
- When watering, water deeply, i.e., at least 1" of water (put a cup out by your sprinkler to measure water). This encourages deeper root growth — grass roots are deeper than most weed roots.
- Do not over-water. Soil can absorb only so much moisture, then rest runs off.
- Avoid watering on windy days, as this can increase evaporation loss.
- Water lawns early in the morning during the hotter summer months. Otherwise, much of the water will evaporate. Late-day watering can encourage mold growth.
- To avoid excessive evaporation, use a sprinkler that produces large drops of water, not a fine mist. Sprinklers that send droplets out on a low angle also help control evaporation.
- Use drip irrigation systems for bedded plants, trees or shrubs, or turn soaker hoses upside-down so the holes are on the bottom. This will help avoid evaporation.
- Avoid automatic sprinkler systems that are timed to a schedule. If they must be used, rain shutoff devices are essential.
- Collect runoff water from gutter downspouts in rain barrels for outdoor watering use.
- Plant rain gardens (plants requiring moist soil) near down spouts.
- Plant more trees to increase shade and reduce watering needs.
- Evaporation loss can be 60 percent higher during the day, so water all plants during the evening hours.

Why Take Action?

Typical suburban houses use at least 30 percent of their water for outdoor lawn watering, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Some experts estimate that more than 50 percent of landscape water is wasted due to evaporation, wind, and/or over-watering.

Pollution:

- Refrain from using pesticides. Try other alternatives instead: ladybugs eat aphids and marigolds ward off beetles.
- Prevent runoff of fertilizers, chemical fluids, soaps, gray water, etc. into storm drains — they lead directly to water bodies.
- Never place waste of any kind into storm drains. Waste can clog the storm drains and pollute water bodies.
- Pick up pet waste. It generates disease-carrying bacteria and nutrients that can pollute water bodies.
- Keep natural buffer zones intact around wetlands, streams, rivers and ponds. This will help prevent runoff into those water bodies and will provide important natural habitat for animals.
- Never hose down sidewalks or driveways. The water runoff can carry oil or chemical runoff into water bodies.
- Avoid gas-powered leaf blowers and snow blowers. They contribute significantly to air and noise pollution. Consider green alternatives, or opt for rakes and shovels.
- If you must use a lawn mower, perform regular maintenance for efficiency.
- Have your soil tested to check for the right levels of nutrients, as well as pollutants. **U. Mass. Amherst** offers this service for a fee to individuals and companies in all 50 states. www.UMass.edu/plsoils/soiltest

Why Take Action?

Five to 10 percent of the nation's air pollution is generated by gasoline-powered lawn & garden equipment, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Fertilizers:

- Use white vinegar for weed removal.
- Plant quick-sprouting plants to block weed growth.
- Use food scraps, yard trimmings, and other organic waste to create a compost pile. Compost is a rich soil amendment that can help increase water retention, decrease erosion, and replace chemical fertilizers.
- Make your own natural lawn fertilizer.
  - Combine 2 c. water, 1 c. beer (the cheaper the better), 1 c. Epsom salts, 1 c. ammonia into a medium-sized container.
  - Pour mixture into a watering can with a spray head.
  - Distribute fertilizer as if you were watering your lawn.
  - Pour leftover contents into re-sealable container.
  - Wait two to three weeks.
  - Reapply if necessary.

Why Take Action?

Excess petrochemical and other synthetic fertilizers are the leading cause of water quality problems, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. They run off the land and are carried away by rainwater into streams, rivers, and ultimately the oceans, with harmful effects on drinking water supplies, recreation, fisheries, and wildlife.

Tips and Warnings:

- The beer will help feed the roots. The Epsom salts will keep the ground aerated by breaking it up; this will help it "breathe" and prevent it from getting hard. The ammonia will kill any fungus or bacteria in the dirt.
- This recipe should fertilize an area 400-600 square feet, depending on the water pressure through the canister. You may need to increase the amount by doubling or tripling the recipe to meet your needs.
- When working with ammonia, be careful not to inhale any of the fumes.

Lighting:

- Avoid any outdoor lighting that is not necessary for safety.
- Use solar or LED lighting in your yard.
- Put outdoor lights on movement sensor switches.

Soil and Planting:

- Fertilize with an organic fertilizer, and only when necessary. Grass in New England is dormant in the winter and semi-dormant in the summer. Fertilizing in the summer feeds the weeds, not the grass.
- Avoid use of pesticides and herbicides if possible. Select non-toxic products.
- Have the pH of your soil professionally tested. Add lime if it is below 6.0 and gardener's sulfur if it is above 7.0.
- Measure your top soil (i.e., how deep will a shovel go into the soil?) — 4" is adequate, but 8" or more is ideal.
- Plant new seed when the time is right. The best time is from September into the first week in October. Spring, from the third week in April through May (weather depending), is also suitable. Since grass is a cool weather plant, do not attempt to plant grass in summer.
- If you are planting or replacing part of a lawn, tall fescue may be a good choice. It is one of the most durable grasses and does well in shade and sun.
- Over-seeding is a way to prevent weeds.
- Buy equipment and tools made from recycled products.

Why Take Action?

Grasses grow best in slightly acidic soils with a pH of 6.0 to 6.5, according to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. A soil test will determine the pH level of your soil.

INSPIRE

Although climate change is a serious issue, make these MBA GREEN GUIDELINES, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT a positive experience for you and the members of your office. Enthusiastic participation will encourage eco-friendly habits. Take these practices with you at home. We encourage you to e-mail us your success stories and/or suggestions at *ECOChallenge@massbar.org.*