

# Being In Your Yard

Presentation  
Cat's Outside  
Property Services

## INTRODUCTION

This is a wonderful city in which to live if you like to be outdoors. Take walks around town and look at what people do with their properties, their outdoor spaces. There's so much going on in the collective consciousness, locally, about gardening, about what to do with outdoor spaces. From vegetable gardens on hell strips and fights in legislation over meadow grasses in the front yard, to pushing the question onto the desk of city council, the ultimate question: what is a "weed"?

## FIND THE ROOMS

I ask you to go home after this assembly, maybe tonight, in the moonlight, or tomorrow, whenever- and enter your outdoor property, step foot in it, as if your yard was a collection of more rooms to your house. The only difference being, these are outdoor rooms.

the ROOMS of one's outdoor property? How do you find them?

Every yard has its cardinal directions- North south east and west. Every property, four corners A front and a back and two sides. That's Eight rooms right there or eight different locations and each with a character of their own, a shape, an elevation, a condition of light or shade unique to each. By recognizing the latent character in what's already there, you have a head start on design and installation. And you also have the inspiration to expand the places you can be at your homestead. Who doesn't like a lot of choices when it comes to pleasurable spaces at ones home?

One must get to know where the sun rises, where it sets, where it blazes daylong and where its rays never hit the ground. Survey the lay of the ground, it's low here, high there, down there soggy, over there, dry. Work with its inherent characteristics. It's already established its topography, its soil composition, its average moisture content, its light and shade.

Interact with your yard, engage with it and develop a relationship with it so it's no longer a choice between spending money on a service or spending your time. It's a choice between paying a service or your enjoyment. And enjoyment is not only the most economical choice, it's the most fulfilling choice.

*\*renters check their leases and research what outdoor property maintenance or improvements are your responsibility and which are your landlord's. Not that it should stop you, if you are a renter, from beautifying your outdoor space. I rent but that has not stopped me from beautifying the property. And I've never asked the homeowners for a penny because I just have to do it. The property must be a space that makes me feel good.*

## **I. Basic Maintenance**

There are maintenance tasks that are necessary, things you have to do to comply with city codes, community standards etc... These are things that if you let them go, it won't only lower the appeal of your property, it could get you fined. There are also maintenance tasks that are not legally critical but are aesthetically very pleasing to fulfill.

### **A. Weeding-**

*Tools Needed:* stirrup hoe, small trowel, small cultivator claw, gloves, bucket or bag for weeds and debris, knee pads or kneeling pad (or make it an exercise routine, do squats and forgo the knee padding)

*Four means of Keeping weeds down*

1. Regular manual maintenance
2. Weed block material, fabric, newspaper or mulch.
3. Ground cover plants/cover crops
4. Herbicidal and pre-emergent products, those both organic and chemically derived in a lab  
Dawn, Epsom Salt and Horticultural grade Vinegar

### **B. Hedge, shrub, perennial and other trimming**

Tools needed: hedge sheers manual or electric speed trimmers, pruning lopper, hand pruners

### **C. Lawn –**

tools needed: Lawn mower and weed whacker

mowing and trim edging (all season)

aerating, thatch raking (once in the early Spring)

over-seeding (in early spring or late summer- grass seed loves cooler wetter weather)

fertilizing with grass clippings and compost (in early spring or autumn)

Irrigating at least every other day in dry spells

**D. Edging garden beds and walkways and sidewalks along grass-** Keeps sod from overlapping the walkways and gives sharp clean lines where manmade borders meet vegetation. Along garden beds, keeps grass from infiltrating.

### **E. Tree Pruning and Woody Invasive Tree Removals**

Weed tree removal, especially as they grow along foundations and fence lines is important because the roots and limbs of unwanted growths can damage structures, foundation, siding, roofing.

**Call a Professional for Ornamental or Large Native Tree work-**

It's very dangerous work if the limb you are pruning is large or high

A good professional tree pruner is also an arborist and will know how to prune with the health of the tree in mind as well as the safety of life and property below.

### **F. Fall Leaf removal, leaf mulching (with mower) or shredding and composting**

Tools needed: Metal tine rake and plastic leaf rake. Mulching mower or leaf shredder and composter

### **G. June and November rain gutter and downspout cleaning**

Tools needed: Ladder, long flexible yet rigid wire for snaking through downspouts.

Once in June because of the samaras or "helicopters" that fall from maple trees and the male catkins of the oak trees that can clog your gutters and downspouts. Over-flow of runoff over a clogged gutter in spring and summer from rain can wash out garden beds and planting areas below and also cause water to pool and collect around foundation. Make sure downspouts have connections that carry water away from the house.

Also, do it once in November to clear the leaf fall debris. Frozen water in a clogged gutter over winter can damage and deform the gutter and cause overflow of roof melt and consequently, dripping and freezing below onto porches and stairs

## **II. Beautification** Installing a garden bed/growing area

### **A: Basic tools and equipment**

1. Metal tine rake
2. Garden trowel
3. English spade shovel
4. Stiff tine rake
5. Stirrup hoe
6. Pruner/ loppers
7. Long handled digging shovel, pointed spade

**B. Installation:** \*Before Planting anything with a large root ball, before digging deep to install a bed, any deep digging or change of your landscape, lowering of grades, first contact MISS-DIG to find out if there are any gas or water lines where you are digging. <http://www.missdig.org/>

*Think about not only what you want to see in your garden, but also where you'd like to see it. Do you like to see the garden on the way to your car in the morning and when you come home at night? How about something visible from the street? Would you like to see a garden from your kitchen window? From your front living room window? Placing the garden and the plants is as much a matter of the view from the house as it is the view from outside.*

*After you've chosen your desired place for your installation:*

- 1. Destroy the weeds and or grass** and remove all root matter of those pre-existing plants and growths.
- 2. Turn over the soil with a spade or a rototiller.**
- 3. Test the soil**

Michigan State University Extension Soil Lab soil test mailer (in appendix)

Tells you: 1- Level of plant nutrients in your soil 2- what kind of fertilizer and how much if needed.

3- whether it's acidic or alkaline 4- if lime or Sulphur are needed and how much to add

5- texture of soil (approximate)

6- organic matter levels

You can also buy a battery operated or solar home tester which can give you appx spot readings for acidity/alkalinity, light conditions, and moisture.

- 4. Amend the soil** The pH scale indicates acidity or alkalinity. A soil with a pH number below 7 is acid, while one with a pH above 7 is alkaline.

To raise pH to make acidic soil more neutral use lime (ground or powdered), sea shells, wood ash,

To lower pH to make alkaline soil more neutral use sulfur or ferrous sulfate for a more rapid soil

conditioning. For lowering pH, over time, continue to apply compost and manure.

Sandy or clay soil, add compost or shredded leaves and mix it in,

Fertilizer amendments- You can use commercial, chemical fertilizers or natural, organic ones.

If the soil cannot be amended sufficiently to support planting, raised garden beds are a good option.

### **C. Choosing Plants**

**TAKE YOUR TIME AND LOOK AROUND** Go to one of our fine southeastern Michigan nurseries and just walk around on a Saturday in May. Find a plant that speaks to you, the one that leaps out at you and plants itself in the front yard of your mind's eye. Or go take a walk in the neighborhoods and observe what other people are planting and make note of what appeals to you. Take your time.

**EDUCATE YOURSELF** on the plants you like BEFORE YOU PURCHASE OR PLANT It would help to know, before your shopping trip, what kinds of light, moisture and soil conditions exist on your property, so you don't end up bringing home a plant you fell in love with but didn't have a home for, in the end. For a successful shopping trip know of your property and of those plants that catch your eye: Your planting area.

Is your planting area in sun or in shade? How many hours of direct light does it get?  
If it's shade, what kind of shade? Dense shade, light shade, dappled shade, high canopy shade  
Under what light conditions do the plants you want thrive?  
Do your desired plants like moist soil or dry soil, or frequently watered but well-drained soil?  
Does the plant prefer sandy soil, loamy soil or clay soil?  
If it blooms, what months does it bloom?

You'll need to know this so you can "arrange" bloom times to overlap, so there is always something blooming, flowering of interest, in the garden. With a few winter berry bearing shrubs you can have something blooming in your garden year round in our zone 5.

How big does it get, how tall and how wide.

You'll need to know this for placement in relation to its neighbors in root.

Some of this information will be on the tag that comes with a plant you buy, but never all of it and rarely most of it. If you haven't already researched your plants, these questions can and should all be answered to you by a nursery employee before you leave, just so you know what this plants needs are.

Start Small and with cornerstone types of plants. Build around those design staples, with ground covers, smaller plants, of different textures, complimentary hues, and different colors of foliage and flower. Think in layers.

### *Layer One: Plant Perennial Flowers and Groundcover*

Perennials are the plants that come back, with proper care, every year

Our focus for this presentation will be on Michigan Native Wildflowers and plants.

What is "Native" as it applies to Native Michigan. It means plants that existed in Michigan before colonial European influence.

The DNR's oft overlooked great work: Roadside conservation and strategic cultivation includes an emphasis on Native plants.

#### **Benefits of choosing Michigan Natives**

Hearty and drought resistant.

Adapt well to extreme weather and climate events in their native region

Deep root systems are beneficial to the water cycle. Deep root systems filter run off, literally

Cleaning and purifying the water before it reenters the watershed.

Other regional plants and animals rely on their native brothers and sisters to sustain.

Lower maintenance- that doesn't mean "no maintenance". Native plants, like any plants, benefit from management, trimming, soil amendments, watering solutions, end of season culling and cutting. Depending on one's vision of one's garden, its order, aesthetic impact, tidiness in a garden, a lot of energy and attention can be spent with native perennials. But generally speaking, due to their heartiness in their own zone, natives are pretty self-reliant.

**Layer Two: Plant Shrubs** Shrubs are wood plants branches out at the base, usually less than 25 feet- (Source: Healthy Home and Garden Program of SOCCRA)

The benefits of shrubs:

- shelter for wildlife
- privacy/screening
- aesthetic pleasure
- shrubs are the link between ground cover plants and trees
- shrubs are an essential presence in the design, both ecologically and aesthetically

### **Layer Three: Plant Trees**

Benefits:

1. Provides shade, keeping houses cooler and lowering summer energy costs.
2. Adds value to the home property
3. Cleans the air of CO2
4. Absorbs rainfall and reduces polluted municipal, infrastructural runoff from reentering the aquifers.
5. Trees are great companions, like pets that can live over a hundred years.

**Planting Vegetables and Herbs:** If you have not set aside a plot dedicated to vegetables, vegetables and herbs can be interspersed throughout the landscape, amongst other plants. Herbs, especially, can make great fill and ground cover in any landscape.

Also: Research *Groundcovers, Annuals, Mosses, Bulbs*

#### **D. Mulching For:**

1. Moisture retention
2. Weed suppression
3. Aesthetic appeal
4. Slow release nutrient source- Different types of mulch interact with your soil differently, some leach nitrogen as they decompose
5. Insulating - keeps root base warmer in winter and cooler in summer and improves aeration and drainage and soil structure

#### **Types of mulch:**

- wood mulches (cypress, cedar, mixed hardwood mulches both undyed and dyed)
- Newspapers
- Plant debris from grass clippings and spent perennials, shredded bark
- Straw or hay
- Shredded leaves (NO BLACK WALNUT -EVER)

Do not pile mulch against woody trunks or plants. It's not advised either to pile mulch up to the main stem of a non woody plant. Mulch collects and holds moisture and will hold a layer of mold and fungus inducing warmth and moisture against the bark of a woody plant and compromise the bark and pith, making it vulnerable to insect and disease.

Do not lay finely ground mulches too thick. It could matt and prevent moisture from entering the soil and cause the air beneath to become overheated and over-moist and damaging to roots.

Mulch can be refreshed by going through it with a hand claw cultivator or rake.

## III Demonstration

### A. Clothing, Coverage and Protection

Long sleeve shirts, gloves, eye protection (UV ray block sunglasses), wide brim gardening hat that shadows face and back of the neck. Sunblock, high SPF, keep legs covered, long pants. But bare feet. Go for it. That's the best. I always work at clients' properties in boots, but at home, it's bare feet all the way.

### B. Planting

Tools and materials needed:

Garden trowel, planting spade or small shovel, claw cultivator

Organic fertilizer

Soaker hose or watering hose

1. Choosing a spot- make sure the light and shade, soil content and drainage, moisture content of the spot are suitable for the plant you are planting.

2. Digging a hole-

Width: 2 -3 times the diameter of the root ball

Depth: up to the bottom of the stem or trunk with main flare roots slightly above the surface level

3. Fertilizing the hole- lightly sprinkle organic fertilizer in the hole and around the perimeter

4. Unpacking the plant

breaking up the rootball

5. Cover rootball with soil and pack lightly every so often.

Don't pack soil too tightly around rootball

6. Make a little "moat" for water

7. Mulch

8. Water. Water. Water.

Water frequently the first month, to help it establish. During dry spells water new plants once a day, directly and heavily, or gradually throughout the day via soaker hose or sprinkler on a timer. After it's established, one can generally allow mother nature to take over, except perhaps during extremely hostile and prolonged conditions, like summer-long droughts, where intervention and artificial irrigation is necessary for the plants survival.

## FINALE:

You are raising property value of your own home and your neighborhood

It's a civic economic honor to beautify your city.

You're not only owning but living in your property- the outside as well as inside

Adding rooms to BE in

That's an increase in real value – consider your outdoor spaces “rooms of the house”

### **It's healthy!**

Soil has been identified as containing microbes that have an anti-depressant effect

<https://qz.com/993258/dirt-has-a-microbiome-and-it-may-double-as-an-antidepressant/>

You breathing the air. Expanding your lungs.

You're getting exercise, filling your muscles with oxygen rich blood

You are meeting nature face to face, feeling the rain and the wind and the sun

the seasons, the heat and cold; it all keeps your body alive

And yard work is a great replacement, an all body workout alternative to the slavish, tolling bell of the gym, the scheduled workout routine, in a carpeted, smelly, fluorescent stranger-danger and stainless steel nightmare set to migraine inducing music. You don't need a gym membership if you have a garden, if you tend to your outdoor spaces.

Most of the master gardeners I know are in their 70's, 80's and 90's and they are still gardening. None of them go to a gym.

Developing a relationship with your outdoor property also introduces you intimately to the cycle of birth, life, death and renewal. It's spiritual. It's a space you pass through every day. And it's a space that passes through you.

Happy Spring!

Thank you

Cat

Cat's Outside

Property Services

248 979 2641

## APPENDIX:

### List of Good Local Nurseries and Sources

#### **Telly's Nursery**

3301 John R. Rd, Troy MI

248 689 8735

<https://www.tellys.com/>

#### **Bordine's**

1835 S Rochester Rd, Rochester Hills, MI 48307

248 651 900, <http://bordines.com/>

#### **Ray Wiegand's Nursery**

47747 Romeo Plank Rd, Macomb, MI 48044

586 286 3655

#### **Eastern Market Corporation -**

2934 Russell Street

Detroit, MI 48207

Saturdays 6am to 4pm

<https://www.easternmarket.org/markets/events/saturday-market:>

#### **Dave Steinkopf and Sons**

888 Wheeler Rd, Snover, MI 48472

810-672-9459

<http://steinkopfandsons.com/>

#### **---Specializing in Native Plants----**

**The Native Plant Nursery LLC**- Greg Vaclavek P.O. Box 7841, Ann Arbor MI 48107

734 677 3260

[www.nativeplant.com](http://www.nativeplant.com)

For a comprehensive list of Michigan Native Perennials, Shrubs, Groundcovers and Trees go to

[http://www.nativeplant.com/plants/list\\_plants#forbs](http://www.nativeplant.com/plants/list_plants#forbs)

#### **Oakland Wildflower Farm – Ruth Vrbensky**

520 N. Hurd Rd. Ortonville, MI 48462-9419

248 969 6904

<http://www.oaklandwildflowerfarm.com/>

#### **American Roots**

1958 Hidden Lake Trail Ortonville MI 48462

248 627 8525

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/naturalgardensllc/>

## LINKS

**The Wildflower Association of Michigan** has a great website. It is a deep resource of information on wildflowers and anything you need to know about growing them.

<http://www.wildflowersmich.org/index.php?menu=20>

It's also a portal to sources of Michigan native wildflowers:

<http://www.wildflowersmich.org/index.php?menu=9>

**Michigan State University Extension Resources:** One of the country's top Agricultural and horticultural schools has endless available resources online concerning gardening, ecology and anything that lives and grows outdoors. Here are a couple links.

<http://www.msusoiltest.com/> soil test mailer contact

MSU Extension You Tube Channel – many many videos on gardening and cultivating.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/msuanrvideo07>

**Ferndale and Pleasant Ridge Area Gardeners Forum link online (Facebook):**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/347452672132489/>

A great resource in the local online community. You put up your question and it gets answered by one, if not many, of the thousands of avid gardeners on the forum.

**"Friends of the ROUGE"- [www.therouge.org](http://www.therouge.org) (website)**

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsoftheRouge/> (Facebook)

Great periodic hardcopy and digital online newsletters and releases sharing information on how our to protect our watersheds by what we do with our own properties. Big proponent of native wildflower gardens.

**Ferndale Library Event: The Beauty of Native Plants.**

**April 9 2018, 6:30- 8:00pm**

**Facebook Link to event and registry**

[https://www.facebook.com/events/1506140862818287/?notif\\_t=event\\_calendar\\_create&notif\\_id=1520365156341229](https://www.facebook.com/events/1506140862818287/?notif_t=event_calendar_create&notif_id=1520365156341229)

**Miss Dig** – Contact before excavation or deep digging to find out what utilities are in your yard and where that utility equipment is located. **Call 1-800-482-7171**

**or go to the Miss Dig website <http://www.missdig.org/>**

**MNLA Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association** 2149 Commons Parkway • Okemos, Michigan 48864 Phone (517) 381-0437 • FAX (517) 381-0638 • [www.mnla.org](http://www.mnla.org)

great source of bi monthly publications and annual publications chock full of planting ideas and green, ecological methods of maintaining your property.

## **Municipal Web Sites:**

Here you can find links to your city's services regarding debris pick up, leaf removal and codes governing maintenance requirements for outdoor properties.

### **Ferndale:**

<https://www.ferndalemi.gov/resources/yard-waste> yard waste pickup guidelines and schedules

<https://www.ferndalemi.gov/resources/fall-leaf-pickups> leaf pickup guidelines and schedules

[https://library.municode.com/mi/ferndale/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=PTIICOOR\\_CH20VE](https://library.municode.com/mi/ferndale/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIICOOR_CH20VE)  
city ordinance on vegetation

### **Oak Park:**

[http://www.oakparkmi.gov/departments/public\\_works/waste\\_removal.php](http://www.oakparkmi.gov/departments/public_works/waste_removal.php) Yard waste pickup guidelines and schedules

[https://library.municode.com/mi/oak\\_park/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=PTIICOOR\\_CH18BUBUR\\_E\\_ARTVIPRMACO](https://library.municode.com/mi/oak_park/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIICOOR_CH18BUBUR_E_ARTVIPRMACO) – Code ordinances governing property, including outdoor environment

### **Hazel Park**

[http://www.hazelpark.org/i\\_want\\_to/trash\\_and\\_yard\\_waste.php](http://www.hazelpark.org/i_want_to/trash_and_yard_waste.php) yard waste pickup guidelines

[https://library.municode.com/mi/hazel\\_park/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=TIT15BUCO\\_CH15.09PRMACO\\_15.09.010ADPRMACO](https://library.municode.com/mi/hazel_park/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT15BUCO_CH15.09PRMACO_15.09.010ADPRMACO) – code ordinances governing outdoor and indoor property

### **Royal Oak**

<https://www.romi.gov/340/Yard-Waste> Yard waste pickup guidelines and schedules

<https://ecode360.com/8261826> Code ordinance governing landscaping and outdoor property

### **Some recommended Sun Loving Perennials**

1. Monarda (Bee Balm)
2. Culver's Root
3. Swamp Milkweed
4. Butterfly Weed
5. Black Eyed Susan
6. Coneflower
7. Asters
8. Sedum
9. Jo-Pye Weed
10. Dianthus
11. Coreopsis
12. Phlox
13. Daffodil and tulip bulbs

### **Some Shade Perennials and Blooming Periods:**

#### ***Early Spring Blooming***

1. Jack in the Pulpit
2. Trillium (pink, white or yellow)
3. Hellebore
4. Blood root

#### ***Spring into Summer Blooming***

1. Virginia Blue Bells
2. Foam Flower
3. Brunnera (Alexander's Great or Silver Heart)
4. Heuchera (Coral bells)
5. Astilbe
6. Lungwort (pulminaria)
7. Baptista
8. Cordialis
9. Lamium (ground cover)
10. Primrose

#### ***Late Summer to Fall Blooming***

1. Ligularia Dentata
2. Bleeding hearts
3. Liriope
4. Toad Lilly
5. Colechium
6. Monk's Hood
7. Leadplant
8. Hosta

\*Ferns and mosses grow all season long and are a wonderful presence in shade conditions