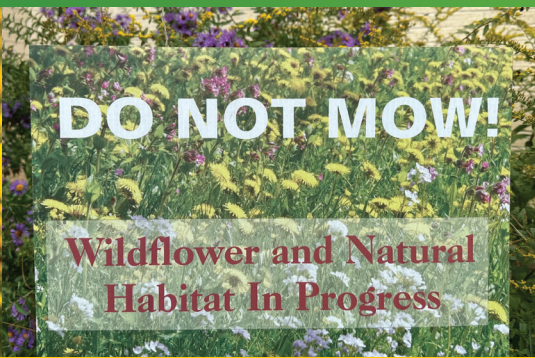




Eastern Tiger Swallowtail on Tickseed Sunflower
photo by Joanna Brichetto



DO NOT MOW!

**Wildflower and Natural
Habitat In Progress**



Black Swallowtail on Wild Violet
photo by Joanna Brichetto

TOP 10 WAYS HOAS CAN SUPPORT

Birds and Butterflies WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK

SAVE MONEY:

01 MOW SMART

Reduce mowing to every other week, taking into account the season and rainfall. Raise blade height to 3-4 inches to create healthier, greener grass that requires less water, and to allow a mower to pass safely over a fledgling bird, turtle, or baby cottontail. Leave clippings where they fall: they recycle nutrients back to the soil, and do not cause thatch buildup. By also eliminating lawn treatments (see below), potential savings could be as much as 50%. If you can't give up the old, unsustainable ideal of a pristine lawn, reduce the area to the main entrance and/or the most visible common areas.

02 ELIMINATE LAWN TREATMENTS

Pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers are expensive, unnecessary, and end up in our water systems, but every year Americans add more than 80 billion pounds to lawns. These products harm beneficial insects, insect predators, birds, and the entire food web, including pets and people. According to the National Institutes of Health, "Pesticides can contaminate soil, water, turf, and other vegetation. In addition to killing insects or weeds, pesticides can be toxic to a host of other organisms including birds, fish, beneficial insects, and non-target plants." (Acceptable, targeted pesticides include termite bait stations and Bti dunks for mosquito larvae.)

03 DESIGNATE A NO-MOW-MEADOW AREA

Turfgrass offers no ecological benefits. To improve habitat, choose a hidden or less prominent common area to mow only one time per year, in spring. Keep the borders tidy and use signage to explain its importance as firefly and pollinator habitat and nesting habitat for birds. The Natural Resources Defense Council says that turfgrass, "however welcoming it looks for our bare feet, provides virtually no habitat for pollinators and other animals and plants that make up a healthy, diverse ecosystem."

04 LEAVE THE LEAVES/ SAVE THE STEMS

A light coating of leaves will not harm turfgrass, but heavy loads can be raked to the entire dripline of the trees from which they fell. Edging and a thin layer of mulch (such as pine straw) can anchor leaves from blowing away. This creates no-mow islands of free mulch and fertilizer, and good habitat for birds. Rake extra leaves to garden beds and fence-lines to suppress weeds and build healthy soil. Still too many leaves? Compost them, or share with neighbors or a school garden. An added benefit is the reduction of leaf blower use. Leaf blowers literally kill; 250 mph winds create air pollution much worse than traffic exhaust, and can instantly kill beneficial insects. Don't "tidy" flower stalks in fall: seed-eating birds harvest seeds all winter, and stems are used by next year's native bees. Spring's new growth will hide old stalks, which will decompose and enrich the soil.

05 STOP PLANTING MASSES OF ANNUAL FLOWERS

Most popular bedding annuals are sterile hybrids bred for showy flowers that do not feed pollinators. Examples include begonias, pansies, and mums. Annuals are expensive to replace every season, and need extra irrigation. Instead, plant locally-native perennials (see #6). If seasonal color is a high priority, target smaller areas for annuals to reduce cost.

Nashville Mustard and Spring Beauty,
photo by Joanna Brichetto



PUT THE SAVINGS TO WORK:

06 PLANT NATIVE TREES, SHRUBS AND GROUNDCOVERS

Create ideal habitat for birds and butterflies by planting canopy trees such as oaks, with underplantings of native shrubs and groundcovers. Native species in general are acclimated to our climate and soils, need less water and care, and are more likely to survive extreme weather. Oaks provide more ecological value than any other genus, but all native trees provide year-round food, shelter, and nesting sites. (Trees that have evolved on other continents cannot offer the same functionality here.) Canopy trees also create HVAC savings, control erosion, capture stormwater, and increase property values.

Ruby-throated hummingbird on Coral Honeysuckle,
photo by Graham Gerdeman



FREEBIES:

07 ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD WEED WRANGLE®

Weed Wrangle® can help neighbors organize a volunteer event to remove invasives like bush honeysuckle, privet, and wintercreeper (Euonymus). Local herbivores don't eat the leaves of these exotic plants, which become havens for ticks and mosquitoes. Replacing the tangled mess with native shrubs will provide privacy, beauty, and countless ecological benefits.

08 START A NATIVE GARDEN CLUB

As a fun and non-controversial way to build community, neighbors can share ideas, seeds, and plants; invite speakers for meetings; and organize tours of homeowner yards.

09 EDUCATE NEIGHBORS ABOUT KEEPING CATS INDOORS

"Each year, outdoor cats kill about 2.4 billion birds in the U.S. and Canada

– many of which are young birds that are still in, or just out of, the nest. It's the top human-caused reason for the loss of birds, after habitat destruction. Outdoor cats live 2-5 years on average, while indoor cats may live for more than 15. Save birds and keep cats healthy by keeping cats indoors." (source: Cornell Lab of Ornithology)



10 FIND AND PROMOTE TREE GIVEAWAYS FROM LOCAL NONPROFITS

Organizations offer free trees (and sometimes shrubs) for common areas, public rights of way, and homeowner yards. In Davidson County, for example, Root Nashville, Nashville Tree Foundation, Metro Water, and Tennessee Smart Yards have programs or events with free trees. The Tennessee Environmental Council sponsors a yearly Tree Day with bare-root seedlings at very little cost. Arbor Day and Earth Day are events usually associated with tree giveaways. There are also grants and cost-share programs such as the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP) Community Tree Planting Program "to increase and improve urban tree populations."

To learn more about the Ghertner & Company Sustainability Initiative, visit ghertner.com/sustainability/theinitiative.



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