

Livable Ecosystems: A Model for Suburbia

A suburban livable ecosystem is a landscape that takes advantage of natural processes while providing tangible benefits to its owner. By landscaping this way, we can produce ecosystems services right in our backyard such as cleaning our water, increasing plant and animal diversity, cooling the environment, saving energy, sequestering carbon, and enjoying landscapes for the pleasure they provide.



The **traditional** home landscape:

- contains a limited palette of plants
- has large areas of regularly mowed turf
- allows water to flow off site contributing to storm water problems
- rakes leaves and gets rid of grass clippings disrupting natural processes

A **livable ecosystem** landscape...

Has **reduced lawn space** to:

- better filter water on site
- provide more diversity for wildlife
- help people become more engaged in their gardens



Creates **forests** in the landscape to:

- attract wildlife
- lower air temperatures, providing cleaner air
- save energy by shading buildings

Includes **meadows** to:

- improve water infiltration
- reduce the need to mow
- attract insects that attract birds
- surround activity spaces with appealing plants



Uses **large planting areas**:

- to provide onsite water infiltration
- to maintain clean fresh air through lower temperatures & more carbon sequestration
- that allow people to wander through and enjoy the garden