



the larger landscape

A landscape is much more than the materials it houses. Before diving into material selection, focus on your overall landscape design and how it functions. Make a thorough assessment by considering everything from soil preparation, plant selection, and watering techniques to how storm water flows through your property, landscape maintenance and code compliance.

Natural Lawn & Garden Care

Few people realize that almost every landscape decision you make regarding soil conditions, the planting scheme, watering and maintenance practices bears human health, financial, and ecological implications. By choosing a landscape design with plants that thrive naturally in your yard's particular conditions, you'll save time and money—as well as creating an outdoor space that's healthier for your family, pets, wildlife, and environment. For expert tips on creating a naturally trouble-free landscape, turn to the Seattle's *Natural Lawn & Garden* guides, which include:

- *Natural Yard Care* (the overview introducing the five key steps)
- *Growing Healthy Soil*
- *Choosing the Right Plants*
- *Smart Watering*
- *Natural Pest, Weed, & Disease Control*
- *Composting at Home*, and
- *Natural Lawn Care*.

To receive guides and the companion Plant List, see *Resources*.

Rainwise Landscaping

Especially in rainy Western Washington, it's important to consider how landscape design affects your downhill neighbors, as well as local creeks, lakes, bays and Puget Sound. How do residential landscapes influence water habitat? Hard surfaces shed water, rather than letting it soak into the ground. This allows toxic substances in preservatives, finishes, and some metals to leach into our water, even from landscapes miles from the nearest water body. Seattle storms can scour creeks of native life, cause flooding, and overwhelm parts of our storm water management system—resulting in the release of untreated sewage into local water bodies. Luckily, there are ways to reduce or avoid these problems altogether.

Various landscaping techniques help capture, cleanse, and allow rainwater to filter into the soil. These include rain gardens, pervious paving and pathways, downspout dispersion, proper soil preparation with compost, and mulching. Handling rainwater on site reduces the strain on our stormwater management systems and urban creeks. To learn more about rainwise landscaping techniques, see *Resources* on page 20.

Hardscape Maintenance

Make environmentally friendly maintenance a priority in your new landscape. This includes surfaces that are easy to clean with a broom or brush, and avoiding materials that require repainting or chemical treatment. Selecting naturally rot-resistant and durable materials in the first place makes for easier maintenance down the road. Call (206) 615-0731 for information on fish-friendly landscape maintenance.

Code Compliance

Address any building or land use-related code issues your project may encounter (decks, large sheds and other outbuildings, and retaining walls commonly require permits). To help homeowners and businesses comply with building codes, Seattle's Department of Planning and Development has assembled a series of Client Assistance Memos (CAMs); for more information, see *Resources* on page 20. If you have building or land-use code-related issues or need to determine whether your project requires a permit, contact the Seattle Department of Planning and Development's Applicant Services Center at (206) 684-8850.