



The Benefits of Naturalization



These wildflowers at Edgewood Country Club in New Jersey were planted as part of an extensive naturalization effort on the golf course. The change from worn out rough to wildflowers saved water, reduced chemical use, and reduced labor and equipment wear and tear.

For many people, answering the question “*Why Naturalize?*” when posed by critical employees, committees, or neighbors can be an unsettling prospect. Successfully communicating the many benefits of a naturalization project can make or break support for establishing wildflower or prairie areas, naturalized pond or stream shorelines, and rougher golf course roughs. Here, we share our best answers to this most pressing question:

The Environmental Benefits of Naturalization

- Maintains a diversity of plants and animals.
- Protects ecosystems and ecological communities.
- Improves water quality.
- Maintains the gene pool of particular plant and animal species, promoting hardiness, disease resistance, and adaptability.
- Minimizes erosion.
- Supports an aesthetic appreciation of natural beauty.
- Creates positive, progressive, and constructive attitudes about the natural world.
- Promotes stewardship of the environment and contributes to the conservation of local wildlife species.

Additional Benefits of Lake and Pond Naturalization

- Maintains the food chain for a variety of wildlife species.
- Enhances “structural diversity” of plants along the pond margin. Plants of varying heights and types increase wildlife diversity.
- Provides improved habitat for amphibians, such as salamanders and frogs, especially in ponds that do not contain fish.
- Provides shelter for fish and freshwater invertebrates.
- Supplies food for aquatic organisms.
- Provides waterfowl and wading birds places to feed and rest.
- Stabilizes shorelines and reduces erosion.
- Minimizes or eliminates chemical runoff, especially when combined with a designated “buffer zone” in which no chemicals are applied.
- Improves water quality as plants take up excess nutrients and produce oxygen to aerate the water.

Veeder Elementary School in Albany, NY, naturalized along the border of a woodland behind its playing fields. The area now provides opportunities for nature study.



Financial and Labor Savings

- Lowers maintenance costs and reduces the need for high-intensity or time-consuming maintenance.
- Reduces equipment wear and tear.
- Reduces the need for gasoline, pesticides, fertilizers, and water.
- Enables staff to concentrate where it really counts—highly visible areas or, for golf courses, the playing surfaces.

Additional Benefits

- Increases wildlife sightings.
- Adds distinctive contrast and natural beauty to your landscape.
- Provides places for nature study and enjoyment.

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