



BLUEGRASS GREENSOURCE Green Neighbor



WHAT IS THE GREEN NEIGHBOR PROGRAM?

The goal of the Green Neighbor Certification Program is to encourage homeowners in Central Kentucky to participate in environmentally friendly practices in their own backyard by providing the resources and recognizing their efforts.

HOW DOES THE CERTIFICATION WORK?

Participants complete action items under several categories, including water quality, lawn care, plant installation, wildlife, and community. These actions add up to create a lasting impact on communities in Central Kentucky by improving lawn health, reducing the amount of yard waste sent to landfills, providing habitat for native species, and reducing the amount of pollutants in the water.

HOW CAN I GET MY CERTIFICATION?

Homeowners can apply by completing/submitting the online form. Once participants have completed enough actions to earn a minimum score of 30, they are eligible to receive a certificate. Certificates will be offered free of charge if certified and emailed to recipients as a downloadable/printable PDF.

Directions:

The Green Neighbor evaluation is divided up into 5 sections:

1. **Water Quality & Conservation**
2. **Lawn Care**
3. **Plant Installation**
4. **Wildlife**
5. **Community/Other**

Each section has a series of questions, each one with a points value in (bold green) to the right. Enter the points value for that question if that question is currently applicable for your household. If your answer to any of the following questions is "no" or does not apply to you, enter zero (0). After you answering all the questions and totalling your score, if you have 30 points or higher, then you're ready to fill out the online form to become a certified Green Neighbor!

Go to bggreensource.org/green-neighbor
to submit your form TODAY!

1.) Water Quality & Conservation

If you currently water your lawn, do you limit watering to either mornings or evenings?

(1 point)

Limiting watering in the heat of mid-day reduces water loss from evaporation, which is better for your plants and conserves this resource.

Do you save unwanted household hazardous waste (i.e. car oil, antifreeze, paint, chemicals, etc.) for a local collection event or regular dropoff?

(2 points)

To protect our water quality, do not bury or dump hazardous materials down storm drains or sinks. It all ends up in our drinking water!

Do you use a rain barrel?

(2 points)

Rain barrels are a very useful tool to gather and conserve water to reuse for watering and other lawn care needs.

Do you keep grass clippings, fallen leaves, and other yard waste out of storm drains, waterways, and drainage areas?

(2 points)

Keeping stormwater infrastructure clear of debris is important for keeping pollutants out of our water and for reducing flooding.

If you have a pet, do you pick up your backyard pet waste at least twice per month?

(2 points)

Pet waste contains nutrients that harm water quality.

Do you have a planted border or buffer around your property?

(2 points)

Planted buffers slow runoff and reduce the amount of pollutants that make it back into waterways.

Do your downspouts drain directly onto your lawn, a rain barrel, or into a storm/sewer system?

(2 points)

Downspouts usually drain on to either paved areas, lawns, or are directly connected to the sewer system. When downspouts are directed to your lawn, into a rain barrel, or into a sewer system, it keeps water from picking up runoff pollutants allowing the water to be absorbed by soil, collected in the barrel, or drain into the sewer system. Make sure that your downspouts are not draining on to a paved surface like a concrete driveway or street.

Have you identified whether your home has a sewer or septic system?

(2 points)

When not properly maintained, septic systems are a significant source of groundwater pollution.

Water Quality & Conservation (cont'd)

If you have a septic system, are you having it pumped every 3-5 years?

(1 point)

Proper maintenance of septic systems by pumping them is essential for keeping their contents from leeching into water.

If your property has a creek or stream, have you created a streamside buffer to reduce erosion and filter stormwater runoff?

(3 points)

Also called riparian buffers, these are essential for protecting streams from the impacts of our land use. They provide habitat, reduce runoff pollution, reduce flooding, among many other benefits.

Are your patio(s) and driveway(s) permeable?

(4 points)

As water flows along pavement it picks up pollution and carries it to water bodies. Permeable pavement allows water to soak into the ground where it falls, improving water quality as well as reducing the likelihood of severe flooding.

Have you planted a rain garden on your property?

(4 points)

Where you plant one depends on your yard's needs. You can plant it where it will catch runoff from roofs or near impervious surfaces (if you aren't able to replace them with permeable ones).

2.) Lawn Care

Do you know how to cut your grass appropriately for the type and season?

(1 point)

When mowing your grass, cutting it to the optimal height for the grass type and season allows for deeper root growth and healthier grass. Never cut your grass more than 1/3 of it's length. Cutting your grass properly will create a more drought-resistant lawn. Reference the document from the UK Ag Extension linked to the right on how to mow different species of grass.

Do you leave grass clippings and fallen leaves on the lawn after mowing?

(1 point)

Leaving your clippings ensures that nutrients your grass got from the soil returns to it.

Do you use a solar, electric, or hand powered mower?

(2-3 points)

2 points for solar/electric powered

3 points for hand powered

These alternatives help to limit the fossil fuels it takes to maintain your lawn.

Lawn Care (cont'd)

Have you tested your soil to determine nutrient needs?

(3 points)

Choosing a fertilizer type based on the results of your soil test will help you choose the best composition for your soil's needs and facilitate better growing conditions.

If you fertilize your lawn or garden, do you use phosphorus-free fertilizer?

(2 points)

Fertilizers with phosphorus can cause eutrophication - a reduced level of oxygen in bodies of water causing harm to wildlife and organisms that live there.

If you use herbicide to limit weeds in your lawn or garden, do you use a pre-emergent herbicide?

(1 point)

Doing so reduces the amount of herbicide needed during the growing season.

Do you utilize integrated pest management (IPM) as a method for controlling pests on your property?

(3 points)

Implementing IPM allows you to replace the application of pesticides.

Do you hand pull weeds or use alternative forms of weed suppression?

(3 points)

Using these methods greatly reduces your application of herbicide.

Do you aerate your lawn every other year to prevent weeds and discourage pests?

(1 point)

Aeration promotes healthy grass, relieves soil compaction, and promotes new growth.

If you water your lawn, do you water the yard only when necessary and/or adjust sprinklers so that they are not watering the road or driveway to conserve water?

(1 point)

Overwatering can create more runoff, and watering during the middle of the day when the sun is out will mean that more water evaporates in the sun and isn't absorbed by your grass.

If you have land that slopes, do you water it more slowly to prevent runoff?

(1 point)

Lawns that feature slopes are susceptible to water runoff that can cause erosion and limit nutrients from getting to the roots of the grass.

Lawn Care (cont'd)

If you have perennial plants, do you leave dormant perennials until new growth emerges in the spring?

(1 point)

Dormant perennials provide food and shelter for backyard wildlife.

Do you keep fall leaves on your property when they drop?

(1 point)

They provide wildlife habitats and naturally compost your lawn over fall and winter.

Do you use compost in your yard and flower/garden beds to enrich the soil?

(1 point)

Compost is great for enriching the soil of your garden and can be purchased or made at home!

Do you compost yard waste and/or other compostable materials on the yard or property (not off-site)?

(2 points)

Composting at home is an easy and cost-effective way of creating fertilizer and soil that you can use in your garden!

Do you vermicompost indoors if you cannot compost outdoors?

(2 points)

Vermicomposting is the use of earthworms to convert organic waste into fertilizer.

Have you reduced your current lawn by 30%?

(4 points)

Traditional lawns in the United States are not natural and require many chemicals to maintain while offering little habitat and value to the environment.

3.) Plant Installation

Do you incorporate a variety of native plants in your yard?

(2 points)

Planting a variety of flowers, trees, shrubs, and grasses attracts pollinators.

If you have perennials, do you plant them in bunches?

(1 point)

Planting perennials in bunches is more effective for attracting pollinators.

Have you removed invasive species from your property?

(3 points)

Learn which plant species are invasive in Kentucky and do not plant them on your property. Identify which species are currently on your property and remove them.

Plant Installation (cont'd)

Do you prune and maintain current trees on your property, including street trees?

(2 points)

Regular pruning protects your plants, family, and property from injury, pests, and damage.

Have you planted a tree/trees in your yard in the last year?

(Up to 5 points)

Each tree type below is worth 1 point. Give yourself a point for each type you have planted; you can get up to 5 points:

- evergreen near busy road to filter particulate matter,
- a "super cooler" or "super cleaner" tree (Elm, Lindon, Hornbeam, True Cedar, Bald Cypress, Coffee Tree, Hop Hornbeam)
- native tree(s)
- fruit tree(s)
- deciduous trees on the east or west side of the house to shade an AC unit (this provides energy savings by reducing summer sunlight and thus AC cooling costs, saving energy.)

Trees offer a variety of benefits, including providing habitat for wildlife, increasing real estate value, and improving air quality.

Do you mulch your plant beds?

(1 point)

Properly mulch plants by using a layer of mulch spread in a diameter of at least 3 feet. Mulch helps retain rainwater and acts as a thermal insulator, ensuring that the temperature doesn't get too warm or too cold. Hardwood mulch (not dyed) is preferred.

Do you have a vegetable garden?

(1 point)

There are numerous environmental, social, and economic benefits to growing your own vegetables. You reduce demand for industrially-grown foods, whose growing practices are heavily reliant on fossil fuels, soil degradation, and unethical labor. And once your garden is established, you will save money on produce!

4.) Wildlife

Do you have one or more bird feeders?

(1 point)

Birds can help control insects and pollinate flowers. Bird feeders can help replace food sources that were destroyed by development.

Wildlife (cont'd)

Do you have one or more bird, bee, or bat house(s)?

(1 points)

These houses provide protection for wildlife and a place for wildlife to raise their young.

Do you provide water features such as bird baths and/or ponds?

(Up to 3 points)

1 point for a small feature such as a bird bath

2 points for a large feature such as a pond

3 points if you have one or more of each

These features help to attract wildlife to your yard and improve their quality of life.

Do you retain brush piles, dead trees, and logs when they fall?

(2 points)

These provide diverse habitat options for animals, as well as allowing nutrients to slowly return to the soil.

Do you have or have you constructed a monarch habitat on your property and register it as a Monarch Waystation.

(3 points)

These provide diverse habitat options for animals, as well as allowing nutrients to slowly return to the soil.

5.) Community/Other

Have you shared this program with your neighbor?

(1 point)

Protecting water quality and our wildlife is a group effort, and the more yards participating in a neighborhood the greater the impact!

Are you a member of a garden club or a master gardener?

(1 point)

Do you currently work with your local officials and Bluegrass Greensource to mark the storm drains in your neighborhood?

(1 point)

Have you participated in a tree planting event, volunteered with a community garden, or a similar activity?

(1 point)

GRAND TOTAL
