

Landscaping Report 8/08/08 Frances Wood, Chair

We've created a beautiful new "green" sanctuary it now deserves green landscaping

What is green landscaping?

Green landscaping (often called naturescaping) attempts to preserve and recreate the native vegetation that supports the natural ecology of an area. Native plantings of trees, shrubs and ground covers provide a healthy home for the animals, birds, butterflies, insects and other critters that comprise that ecology.

Why follow green landscaping policies?

As UUs we strive to honor and protect the earth, to be good stewards of the property we own and to live gently on the land. The impact of people on the native habitat of Whidbey Island is extensive and continues to increase. Native habitat has been cut up, built on and destroyed leaving little space for the native plants, animals and birds that make our island their home. We have impacted a large percent of the our church property already with building, parking lots, driveway, pathway, septic system, etc. leaving little natural habitat. Therefore we must be particularly vigilant to offer a healthy ecology with the remainder of our green areas.

Aren't native plants boring and not very pretty?

There are hundreds of species of native plants that offer attractive blossoms, shapes, leaf patterns and branching structures. They bloom and fruit at various times of the year providing an interesting landscape from season to season. When we use native plants we begin to appreciate the variety within our natural forest ecology and learn what birds eat, where butterflies feed and other important lessons of sharing the land with non-human species. A rich native garden will offer the bonus of beautiful birds and butterflies.

Can't we just put the native plants around the back and make the front more attractive with "pretty flowers"?

Our front entry gives a first impression and indicates what we cherish and believe in. If we truly support green landscaping we must make that statement right out front!

Can't we compromise with part natives and part "pretty flowers"?

Our island habitat is drastically compromised. Our own church property is already drastically compromised with building and other impacts. Where would we draw the line to any compromise with native vegetation? The simple solution is to stick with native planting. We humans only spend on average a couple hours a week at church,

yet our wildlife live here 24-7. Their day-to-day needs for food and shelter surely outweigh our need for a brief view of “pretty flowers.”

But native landscaping must be more expensive, right?

On the contrary, native plants are inexpensive, sturdy and reliable requiring less outlay at the beginning and less upkeep through the years.

Does green landscaping really make a difference on our size of property?

A couple weeks ago a family of California quail was observed searching for food within our central green space. American Goldfinches frequent our meadow, chickadees, nuthatches and robins flutter through our shrubs and woodpeckers feed on our trees. Yes, our property can offer habitat to a large number of native species. They were here before we came and green landscaping will help assure that they will continue to have a home on our church property.

Can UUCWI adopt a native plant landscaping policy?

YES! We were not able to build a completely green building, mainly because of cost considerations. But we can create a completely natural habitat to surround and embrace our beautiful new church.