K·A·N·S·A·S
HEALTHY YARDS
AND COMMUNITIES

BUILDING A GREENER COMMUNITY
ONE YARD AT A TIME.

How Healthy is Your Yard?

Use this self-assessment to evaluate maintenance practices in your yard.

For more information, contact your local
K-State Research and Extension office or visit
www.KansasGreenYards.org

Build and Maintain a Healthy Soil	Points Possible	Points Received
Soil tests are conducted every 3 to 5 years to determine pH and nutrient levels in lawn, shrub/flower beds, and fruit/vegetable gardens, if present. Nutrients and/or amendments are added based on test results. (Submit soil for testing at your local K-State Research and Extension office.)	3	
One to 3 inches of compost is dug or rototilled into the soil when creating new shrub and flower beds, fruit/vegetable gardens, and new lawns.	2	
Compost is worked into flower, fruit, and vegetable gardens every spring and fall.	2	
Lawns are aerated every 1 to 3 years as needed depending on grass, soil type, and level of traffic.	2	
Total Points for Build and Maintain a Healthy Soil	**9**	

Right Plant Right Place	Points Possible	Points Received
Majority of plants are adapted to environment and appropriate for site.	5	
Majority of trees, shrubs, and flowers require minimal fertilizer and watering.	3	
Trees near overhead or underground utilities are spaced away from utilities at appropriate distances according to power company guidelines.	2	
Plants are grouped according to water and maintenance needs.	2	
Trees are maintained with good pruning practices to reduce damage in ice and wind storms. Trees are evaluated for potential hazards and removed if recommended.	2	
Trees and shrubs are positioned for energy efficiency.	2	
Plants are spaced appropriately based on their mature size.	1	
Landscape does not intentionally include plants identified as noxious or invasive by the Kansas Department of Agriculture. Current information: *http://www.ksda.gov/plant_protection/*	1	
Total Points for Right Plant Right Place	**18**	

Water Wise	Points Possible	Points Received
The established landscape is designed to exist on natural rainfall or minimal supplemental watering.	4	

Water Wise, Cont...		
For automated in-ground irrigation systems, functioning smart-irrigation technology is used, such as soil moisture and water loss sensors, rain shut-off devices, and/or other automated devices. For manual watering systems, soil moisture is checked before watering and automatic timers are used to control water run times.	3	
When watering, sufficient water is applied to soak deeply into the soil, and soil is allowed to dry before watering again. Watering on a set schedule is avoided.	3	
Turf is allowed to go into managed dormancy.	3	
Lawns, shrub/flower areas, and fruit/vegetable gardens are watered separately and only as necessary to sustain growth and plant health (in compliance with local water restrictions).	2	
Watering is monitored seasonally and adjusted based on weather and plant type.	2	
Drip or micro-irrigation, or soaker hoses, are installed in shrub/flower beds and fruit/vegetable gardens when appropriate.	2	
Watering system is adjusted to prevent application of water to hard surfaces such as sidewalks and driveways.	2	
A rain gauge is used to monitor rainfall.	2	
If using overhead sprinklers, watering is done early in the morning.	1	
Proper backflow devices in place.	1	
Total Points for Water Wise (Add Water Wise points from page 1.)	**25**	

Mulch	Points Possible	Points Received
A 2- to 3-inch layer of organic mulch is maintained around young trees, shrubs, flowers, and fruit/vegetable gardens.	3	
If used around trees, mulch is pulled away from the base of the trunk.	2	
Self-mulching areas exist under trees where leaves can remain where they fall, especially under evergreens.	2	
Total Points for Mulch	**7**	

Grasscycle and Compost	Points Possible	Points Received
Lawns are mowed at height appropriate to grass species, never removing more than one-third of the grass blade at one time. Fescue: 2.5 to 3.5 inches Kentucky bluegrass: 2 to 3 inches Zoysiagrass: 1 to 2 inches Bermudagrass: 1 to 2 inches Buffalograss: 2 to 3 inches	3	
Yard waste is used on site (compost bin/pile or used in landscape) or placed in proper container for yard waste pickup, if available.	2	
Grass clippings are left on the lawn.	2	
Garden equipment (gasoline, electric, or manual) is maintained and blades are sharpened every 10 hours of use or 2 to 3 times per year for most home lawns.	1	
Total Points for Grasscycle and Compost	**8**	

Fertilizing	Points Possible	Points Received
Lawns are only fertilized when appropriate for the species. For cool-season grasses (tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass), about 75 percent of the total amount of nitrogen applied in a year is applied in September to November. Warm-season grasses (Bermudagrass, buffalograss, and zoysiagrass) are fertilized when actively growing in May through August. For more information, visit *http://www.ksuturf.com/homeowners.html*	3	
Fertilizers containing no or low amounts of phosphorus are used, unless application is recommended to correct deficiency based on soil test results.	2	
Slow release fertilizers are used for all applications except in late fall.	2	
Fertilizer spreaders are properly calibrated prior to use.	2	
Minimal to no supplemental fertilization is used around trees and in landscape beds unless recommended by a soil test.	1	
Fruit and vegetable gardens are fertilized according to individual crop needs.	1	
Total Points for Fertilizing	**11**	

Managing Yard Pests	Points Possible	Points Received
Plants in the landscape are chosen for resistance to insect and disease problems.	5	
Plants are checked every 1 to 2 weeks for signs of problems.	3	
The plant and its problems are positively identified before being treated.	3	
Pests are removed by hand, by pruning, or by other physical means when possible and feasible.	2	
Environmentally friendly pesticides are used when physical approaches are not feasible.	2	
All labels on pesticide products are read before the product is applied, and the product is used according to label instructions.	2	
Pesticide and/or fertilizer products are stored and disposed of properly according to manufacturers' recommendations on product labels and local regulations.	1	
Total Points for Managing Yard Pests	**18**	

Stormwater Runoff and Pollution / Water Quality	Points Possible	Points Received
Fertilizer, grass clippings, leaves and other potential contaminants are removed from the street, curb line, and other impervious surfaces and disposed of properly, to maintain surface water quality.	3	
Bare soil is highly erodable. Areas prone to erosion have soil-stabilizing plant material or mulch.	2	
Rain gardens and bioswales exist to collect, slow, and filter stormwater runoff.	2	
Roof runoff drains onto lawn or landscaped areas instead of impervious surfaces.	1	
Mulch, bricks, flagstones, gravel, and/or other porous surfaces are used for walkways and patios when possible, following local building codes.	1	
Rain barrels and/or cisterns are used to collect rainwater.	1	
Pollutants such as pet waste, paint, and motor oil are disposed of properly.	1	
Total Points for Stormwater Runoff and Pollution / Water Quality	**11**	

Songbirds and Butterflies	Points Possible	Points Received
Flowers, shrubs, and trees are planted that provide cover, nesting areas, or food sources for birds, butterflies, and/or other wildlife.	3	
A water source, such as a bird bath or a small pond, is provided for wildlife. Shallow rocks that hold water are adequate for butterflies.	1	
Wildlife shelters such as bat houses and bird houses are provided, in compliance with local regulations.	1	
Total Points for Songbirds and Butterflies	**5**	

Totals	Points Possible	Points Received
Build and Maintain a Healthy Soil	9	
Right Plant Right Place	18	
Water Wise	25	
Mulch	7	
Grasscycle and Compost	8	
Fertilizing	11	
Managing Yard Pests	18	
Stormwater Runoff and Pollution / Water Quality	11	
Songbirds and Butterflies	5	
Total Points Possible	**112**	

How Healthy is Your Yard?

0-35 points **Waiting to Sprout** – By completing this assessment, you have taken the first step toward improving the health of your yard and community. Use this assessment plus tips from *www.kansasgreenyards.org* to make your yard and community healthier.

36-50 points **Green Seedling** – Your yard has sprouted into a healthier place for you and your community. Continue these healthy practices and strive to implement more of these tips into your yard.

51-75 points **Actively Growing** – You are doing a great job of using environmentally healthy practices in your yard. Implementing a few more practices will have you blooming soon.

76-112 points **Blooming with Green** – You are well aware that your yard management practices affect the health of your community. You are making environmentally conscious choices.

Need help? Your local K-State Research and Extension office can help you find resources to achieve a healthier yard and community. Remember, when hiring landscape services, seek certified or licensed professionals.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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