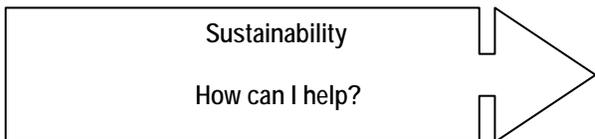


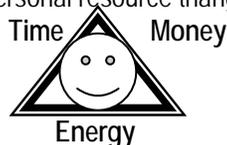
*Encouraging the employment of
Yard and Garden Care
Practices
Supporting the
Black Diamond Sustainability
Plan*

Value #2: Respect the Environment
Vision 2035 Goal: Black Diamond is a community that ensures a quality natural and built environment



If yard and garden care is a pursuit of yours, consider expanding your knowledge and incorporating the practice of some of the following subjects, if you are not already doing so.

Planning and research: Investigate into what type of ecosystem your particular yard space harbors. Determine the extent of your personal resource triangle.



Clarify your expectations, short and long term goals. Research what types of plants, shrubs, trees and ground covers could truly thrive in what your environment and your resource triangle have to offer.

Consider:

Xeriscaping –minimize watering needs by focusing on plants, landscaping styles and gardening techniques that reduce supplemental watering needs

Naturescaping – develop a yard environment using plants native to this region and supportive of the regional fauna; naturalize low use areas

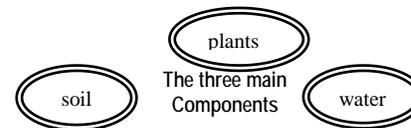
Ground cover alternatives to grass – consider cover plants that do not require mowing and regular watering

Maintenance equipment options – seek to reduce noise and emissions pollution and electrical demands with people powered options where possible; get good equipment that will support you through the project and beyond (and maintain it)

Professional assistance – some projects or elements of projects are more effectively and safely handled by those whose profession requires them to maintain currency in practice knowledge and safety

Information possibilities (just the tip of the iceberg):

- Internet: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawn
- www.oldscollege.ca/.../esy-environmentally-sustainable-yards.htm
- Book: How to Get Your Lawn Off Grass by Carole Rubin



Soil type and Health: What type of soil do you have? What do you require to achieve the healthy survival of your yard and garden members?

Consider:

Composting- One of the best sources of nutrients for your soils. This can be as simple as digging your garden scraps into your soil to as complex as compost bins with ingredients such as manure, sawdust, shredded cardboard, mushroom compost and more. You can even employ worms (vermicomposting).

Fertilizers- When reviewing your fertilizer needs and options, reflect on the long term affects of your choices on your plant environment and the local water system. Learn the pros and cons of organic (slow acting, from natural sources) vs chemical (fast acting, synthetic, highly water soluble). Maybe even try green manure (cover crops).

Research suggestions (just a start):

- Internet: www.organicgardenguru.com/fertilizers
- Books: Worms eat my garbage; The Rodale Book of Composting

Plants – the fragile, the overbearing and the hardy:

Non native plants are not always suitable to the local climate. They may be at high risk of succumbing to disease and pest infestations when appropriate care and conditions are not maintained (exotics) or they could have growth habits (noxious weeds) that put native species at risk of being squeezed out. Choose the right plant for the environment you have and the personal resources you can maintain. This will increase your chances of success and reduce the possibilities of introducing noxious weeds and pests. Noxious and exotic plants require vigilance and effort on our part to ensure that our actions or inactions do not lead to damage of local eco systems or promote higher loads on our water resources. Beyond the non natives, there is also the challenge of other plants not in the “garden plan” inviting themselves in (common weeds) and bugs that beat us to the pleasure of enjoying the fruits, flowers, vegetables and shade of our efforts.

Consider:

Native species- hardy and wise to the ways of the Foothills climate.

Heirloom/heritage varieties- sturdy options that our forebearers relied on.

Companion Planting: plants that provide benefits to neighboring plants, such as soil nourishment, attracting helpful predator insects or repelling unhelpful insects.

Crop Rotation: moving crops to new locations on a scheduled basis to fool damaging insects and to allow the soil to be replenished.

Mulching: applying a ground cover that prevents weeds from establishing strongly, keeps the soil moist, nurtures the soil and makes pulling weeds much easier.

Beneficial Birds and Insects: everything has a natural predator that keeps it lean and humble. Get to know who is actually on your side and what their roles, culinary preferences and habitat needs are.

Suggested Resources:

Internet: www.canadiangardening.com/how-to/.heirloom-plants

Library: Slugs, bugs, and salamanders: discovering animals in your garden; Secrets of companion planting: plants the help, plants that hurt

Water wise

Concern over water resources continues to increase with each passing year. Creative ingenuity and common sense will help us ensure that we do not disrespect our gift of clean, abundant water. Learn from the experiences of severely water restricted communities and strive to be aware of how you use your water, ensuring it is not squandered and continues to support you and those to follow.

Consider:

Water conservation landscaping- choose plants and landscaping methods that require little or no supplemental watering.

Timing- Water in the early morning or early evening to ensure that the moisture does not evaporate before roots get their share or accumulate in such a way as to cause mold and fungal problems. Respect any water restrictions that are in force.

Mulch and Density Planting- seek to reduce evaporation with 1 – 2 inches of mulch and design landscapes that protect the soil from the sun.

Catchment and grey water - keep abreast of progress in rainwater catchment and greywater use and endeavor to incorporate this progress into your yard and garden care activities.

Timers, drip irrigation and soakers - employ technology that helps you water at the right time and only in the right place.

Information possibilities:

Book: Create an Oasis with Grey Water

Internet: landscaping.about.com

Lawn Care

Greening your lawn the sustainable way

Raking: avoid the build up of thatch by raking it out so as to ensure air, water and nutrients can reach the soil

Aeration: mechanically opening holes in the soil supporting your lawn will enable oxygen, water and nutrients to penetrate more readily. (Worms assist, too!) It is good to do this before feeding the soil

Adding Nutrition: fertilizing and/or topdressing with compost or good topsoil once in the season feeds and revitalizes the soil. Understanding the differences between organic and chemical fertilizers as well as the short and long term affects of each one will help you apply the appropriate choice in the safest and most effective manner. When topdressing, be sure to work the new soil through the grass down to soil level so the roots benefit.

Overseeding: done once a season, this will ensure a density of growth and replenish any areas that have weakened or dying grass.

Mowing: strive to maintain your grass height between 6 to 8 cm (3 inches) so as to conserve moisture, promote a thicker growth and crowd out adventuresome weeds. However, if the lawn gets taller, do not cut it back by more than one third the height of the grass in one mowing as the nutrient reserve of the plant will be compromised resulting in a stressed plant. Keep the mower blades sharp to avoid damaging the plant unnecessarily and if the cuttings are short, let them remain on the lawn to break down and feed the soil. If the cuttings are long, they are best decomposed in a compost pile and later added to a top dressing.

Watering: 2.5 cm every 7 – 10 days. Overwatering encourages weed grasses while brief, frequent watering promotes shallow, easily burnt, root growth.

Information possibilities:

Internet: www.immuneweb.org/articles/lawn-care.html

Library: The Everything Lawn Care Book: from seed to soil

- Residential Sustainability - Black Diamond Sustainability Plan

"Many people taking small steps in the same direction can make a big difference and this is never more true than when it comes to sustainable living."

Local Resources:

Sheep River Library with access to all the libraries in the Marigold system and the internet

Local garden and horticultural clubs – check the Gateway Gazette community calendar

Local landscaping businesses and garden centres – see the yellow pages

Fellow Residents – see what neighbors are doing and learning; share experiences and wisdom

Note: The Black Diamond Sustainability Plan can be viewed on the town web site – we welcome your visit.

www.town.blackdiamond.ab.ca