

Maintenance Continued

Mowing maintenance is encouraged, especially on larger tracts of lands to keep invasive weeds down and prevent them from smothering new prairie plants. Herbicide treatments and weeding will complement the mowing and make it more efficient. On smaller parcels, such as private residences, weeding and herbicide applications are encouraged to keep invasive species at a minimum. Once this has been done periodically, the native plants will form a strong community that will be able to fight off invasive species as they come.

An additional maintenance procedure that will speed the maturity of a naturally landscaped site, is the planting of additional native species in bare areas. As weeds are removed, areas will open up allowing new weeds to come in. To prevent this from happening, more native plants should be planted in these bare locations. This will help strengthen the native species, and provide an additional barrier to invasive species that attempt to grow there.



As with any type of landscaping, the weather and species of native plants located in an area will dictate how often maintenance procedures must be performed. There is no set formula, and each naturally landscaped area will have its own requirements. The Village requires that areas have all necessary ecological maintenance procedures performed on them to ensure the area's health and the health and safety of adjacent properties.

Local Companies That Specialize in Ecological Restoration

The Conservation Foundation has helped the Village identify several local companies that can help assist those that would like to have a professional help with the restoration and maintenance of their natural areas. Please note there are more options and this is not an endorsement of these companies.

Earth's Echo	815-786-9512
Located in Somonauk, IL.	
Eubank's & Associates, Inc.	847-824-8325
Located in Glenview, IL.	
Natural Resource Management Inc.	708-935-2100
Located in Beecher, IL.	
Pizzo & Associates, Ltd.	815-498-9988
Located in Leland, IL.	
JF New	708-534-3450
Located in Monee, IL.	

The Conservation Foundation is a not for profit land and watershed protection organization. The Village of Plainfield strongly encourages interested residents to become involved in C@H. The Conservation Foundation offers a Conservation @ Home program, which focuses on the creation of environmentally friendly yards. This includes the planting of native plants, the creation of butterfly and rain gardens and removing exotic species of plants. For more information on this program, please visit:

www.theconservationfoundation.org.

Special Thank You To & References

Chicago Wilderness Magazine, Spring 2007 -
Photo by Jon Nowak.
The Conservation Foundation.
Natural Resources Conservation Service.
Plainfield Public Library - Butterfly Garden.



HOW TO MAINTAIN NATURALLY LANDSCAPED AREAS



Background Information

Native plants are very important to the ecological health of an area. They attract native birds and butterflies that prey on irritating pests like mosquitoes, while providing several other aesthetic and environmental benefits as well. Native plants are plants that evolved naturally in a region over thousands of years, before plants from other areas were introduced by people. These plants grow in areas where they could adapt to soil, moisture and weather conditions. Over time they became resilient to most pests and diseases and strong enough to survive cold winter months and intense summer heat.



Great Blue Heron



Obedient Plant

Photo Courtesy of Steven Pinker

How It Will Benefit You

- You will save significant amounts of money on maintenance fees - savings increase over time and as the natural area matures.
- You attract beautiful wildlife like butterflies and songbirds to your property, reconnecting your family with nature.
- You will increase the beauty and value of your property.
- These plants are encouraged through your Village's Green Village initiative for environmental and aesthetic benefits.

Importance of Maintenance

Though native plantings require significantly less maintenance than traditionally landscaped areas, routine maintenance procedures still must be conducted. If maintenance is not performed, especially in the earlier stages, invasive species and weeds may overtake the area and it will be aesthetically unattractive.

Oftentimes when people think of natural areas, they picture areas that are overgrown with green and brown grasses and weeds. A well maintained natural area is abundant with flowers, color and wildlife. The pictures below illustrate the difference between a well maintained area and an area that has received little maintenance.



Neglected Retention Pond



Unappealing Native Landscaping



Well Maintained Retention Pond



Attractive Rain Garden With Native Plants

The positive aspects of natural area maintenance are that little to no mowing, fertilizer, pesticides and water is needed. According to the Northern Illinois Planning Commission (now CMAP: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning), 90% of the costs of conventional landscaping can be avoided by switching to natural landscaping. Costs reduced include lower water bills in warm months due to less watering. Additionally, the reduced use of gasoline powered mowers and other maintenance equipment reduces emissions of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and smog. This aspect is becoming increasingly important due to global warming concerns as well.

Maintaining Your Natural Areas



In this sequence of photos by Joe Nowak, for the Chicago Wilderness Magazine, Spring 2007 issue, the changes the ecosystem goes through during and after a burn are vividly illustrated. The flourishing photo in the bottom right is how the prairie appeared the summer after the burn. It grew back more lush and beautiful than ever (Nowak, Jon. "Burn and Rebirth." *Chicago Wilderness Magazine*, Spring 2007.).

Prescribed burns are the most desirable maintenance procedure as they recreate the natural process of prairies. These burns require a permit from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, along with collaboration with the appropriate Fire Protection District, and the Plainfield Police Department. These burns are rapid and dramatic processes that are intended to kill off undesirable plant material. The undesirable plant material has short roots, so when the fire sweeps past the plant is killed. The native plants are stronger and have a more complex root system, so they are able to survive the controlled burns. Prescribed burns are best on large tracts of land.



If burning is not an option, a naturally landscaped area can be maintained through spot herbicide treatments, timely mowing events, weeding and planting additional native seeds/species.