SUSTAINABLE MAINTENANCE CALENDAR

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INTRODUCTION

SUSTAINABLE MAINTENANCE GUIDE AND CALENDAR

This guide is intended to equip Illinois Landscape Contractors Association (ILCA) members with all the tools necessary to implement a sustainable maintenance program. It takes into account the constraints of a landscape company in regards to costs, time, equipment, personnel, and horticultural knowledge. The guide is written so any landscape company can apply these maintenance principles to almost any commercial or residential landscape and improve the positive impact on the environment without sacrificing aesthetic quality.

The premise of this guide is for when a contractor interacts with a client or inherits a property and the property owner/manager is unwilling to change any significant portions of the landscape. They do not want to plant or remove large sections of plant material, turf, or hardscaping. The irrigation system will remain as well as existing water features.

The following seasonal schedule demonstrates how a maintenance contractor can implement sustainable landscaping practices into the landscape. Over time the landscape will become more sustainable and affordable to maintain even with the same landscape design.

The guide is organized as a monthly handbook that doubles as a checklist. Each month, crews are equipped with specific instructions on what actions will be completed that month in order to maintain a healthy, regenerative, and successful sustainable landscape.

This is a guide written by contractors for contractors. The guide addresses horticultural principles and best management practices instead of concentrating on features and renovations.

EVERY SUSTAINABLE JOURNEY BEGINS WITH THE FIRST STEP.
FOREWORD

It’s January and you are alone in your office trying to get ready for the upcoming season. Most of the office staff has not yet returned from the winter break and you appreciate the quiet. As you take a sip of your coffee and look at the snow forecast, the phone rings.

“Hello, My Landscaping Company,” you answer.

“Hi, it’s Mary Miller from Mockingbird Lane; happy holidays.”

The Millers have been maintenance clients for seven years. They have two kids, ages 8 and 13 and a dog. They are great clients but with a modest budget. They leave water for the crews and tip them at the end of the year.

“I was hoping you could help me out with our New Years’ resolution this year”, Mary says. “We all committed, as a family, to be more ‘green’. We aren’t doing anything major but just examining all the little areas in our life where we can make a difference. Is there anything you can do to help us make our resolution come true?”

“Well, um,” you respond fumbling for the most recent issue of The Landscape Contractor magazine that you remember had an article on organic fertilizer. “We could think about installing a couple of rain barrels for recaptured water, put in a bio-swale, or maybe rip out that driveway and replace it with some permeable pavers,” you continue.

She pauses. “Thanks, but you know our budget. All of those sound great, but we can’t pay much more than we are currently paying for the maintenance. We love the work you do, but is there anything you can do to go a little greener without changing our current level of service?” she asks.

This is the moment when you become either a spectator or participant in the sustainable landscaping movement. A customer has asked if you have the ability to change your maintenance practices to become more environmentally-friendly. If you say “no” you may lose the client. If you say “yes,” you must deliver. What’s it going to be? Yes or no? This is the moment when sustainability happens.
TURF

☐ Research and build the season’s fertilization and soil building program.

  o Focus on a program that utilizes:
    • Soil biology and building healthy soils;
    • natural sources of nitrogen and other macro nutrients;
    • use slow release when using synthetic sources;
    • consider micro nutrients and other inputs such as iron, manganese, calcium, humus, liquid biologicals, compost, and compost teas.

☐ Commit to following an integrated pest management (IPM) approach for the season. Develop a written plan on how to handle common pests: weeds, insects and fungus.

  o Examples include: dandelions, grubs, clover, crab grass, creeping charlie etc...

☐ Study your priority pests. Understand these pest’s reproductive life cycles and indicators. This will help eliminate or drastically reduce chemical use. Evaluate new environmental friendly control options.

PERENNIALS

☐ Research native perennials for the upcoming season. Develop a list of “go to” perennials for environmental conditions such as wet, dry, sunny-shady, etc.... that you will encounter during the year. Consider the importance of aesthetics when designing with native plants.
**TREES AND SHRUBS**

- Prune disease susceptible species (ex. American Elm) that can only be pruned in the dormant season. See website resource list for additional information links (pg 37).

- Dormant prune all appropriate trees and shrubs. This improves the health and appearance of the plants and reduces maintenance costs. See website resources:
  - [http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/maint/pruning.html](http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/maint/pruning.html)

- Inspect for and remove all invasive plant species. This removes competition for native plant species and helps protect the local eco-systems. See website resources:

**IRRIGATION**

- Research new technology for water savings and water efficiency.
- Determine if any of your current sites could utilize this technology.
- Research and publish water costs for each municipality where you have clients.
SNOW

☐ Repair any broken snow equipment so that proper function and safety are ensured.

GENERAL

☐ Prepare a Sustainable Action Plan (SAP) using the template provided by the ILCA (https://www.ilca.net/sustainable-landscaping/). Communicate the goals of the SAP to clients using email and social media.

☐ Perform proper machine maintenance. This will increase efficiency and reduce emissions.

JANUARY SUSTAINABILITY TIPS

様々 Monitor winter precipitation accumulation amounts. This helps determine spring moisture needs for the plants.

様々 The reality of climate change and its effects on local weather patterns has necessitated lawn care operators to reevaluate both timing and scope of many pest control programs. Time your applications based on weather (soil temperature and degree days for example) and not calendar dates.
FEBRUARY

TURF

☐ Research electric and propane equipment. Talk with colleagues and examine the Illinois Propane Gas Association’s website for potential rebates: http://www.ilpga.org/. Very few companies are taking advantage of these propane and electric difference makers.

☐ Research mulching mowers. High quality mulching kits are an important component to a sustainable turf program and allow the contractor to avoid clipping collection in the spring.

☐ Attend iLandscape: The Illinois + Wisconsin Landscape Show to speak with vendors about sustainable products and equipment. Attend the iLandscape education seminars.

PERENNIALS

☐ Review last years’ maintenance needs to determine what changes can be made to reduce long term maintenance costs. See website resources:


Missouri Botanical Garden: http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/
TREES AND SHRUBS

☐ Continue dormant pruning and invasive species removal.

IRRIGATION

☐ Send proposals to clients to upgrade controls and add water efficient products.

☐ Send staff to educational events and seminars. See website resources:

   Irrigation Association: [www.irrigation.org](http://www.irrigation.org)
   Hunter Industries: [www.hunterindustries.com](http://www.hunterindustries.com)
   Rainbird Corporation: [www.rainbird.com](http://www.rainbird.com)

☐ Educate clients on the importance of reducing water use, both from an environmental and costs savings perspective. See website resources:

   Water Use It Wisely: [www.wateruseitwisely.com](http://www.wateruseitwisely.com)
   EPA Watersense: [www.epa.gov/watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense)

SNOW

☐ Inventory deicing agents to reduce the amount of materials stored onsite.
GENERAL

☐ Develop marketing communication pieces you can use throughout the season to communicate the benefits and expectations of the sustainable practices you are implementing.

FEBRUARY SUSTAINABILITY TIP

◊ Job cost each property and route list to determine what can be done to save time, materials, and fuel while still meeting customer expectations. Consider investing in an industry software tool to manage these efficiencies.
**TURF**

- Train staff on the new propane or electric equipment. Changes aren’t always well-received by the crew, so put dates on the calendar for check-ins (monthly) with the field staff to obtain feedback and make sure propane and electric equipment are being utilized efficiently.

- Inspect blades on a daily basis throughout the mowing season and sharpen as needed. ILCA recommends weekly sharpening.

- First cut at 2” and remove clippings in order to reduce the threat of disease.

- Remove debris accumulated over winter to reduce disease.

**PERENNIALS**

- Remove previous years’ growth prior to bulb development and mulch back into bed using a mower or chipper.

- Apply locally produced leaf mulch in the planting beds instead of wood chip mulch. Wood chips are a less desirable alternative in planting beds.

- Physically remove weeds by hand pulling, hoeing, or cultivating.

**TREES AND SHRUBS**

- Apply dormant oil to control overwintering insects on shrubs and trees as the temperature climbs to above freezing.
  - Mechanical or hand removal of pests should be done before any spray treatments.
□ Use organic pesticides and fertilizers.

□ Apply locally produced leaf mulch or shredded bark in the tree rings. Wood chips are a less desirable alternative unless completely free of inorganic debris or disease. Do not over mulch or allow mulch to touch the bark of the trees.

IRRIGATION

□ Train all field technicians in new technology and enforce efficient irrigation practices.

□ Remind or train staff in the water needs of turf and plants.

□ Train and/or remind all field technicians on proper scheduling of irrigation controllers.

SNOW

□ Inspect property for any damaged plant materials that may have occurred and repair accordingly.

□ Repair any broken snow plow equipment.

GENERAL

□ Think about alternate options for debris management. Spring cleanups are more difficult than fall cleanups for onsite debris management, but it is possible to shred material and apply back into the beds or in a compost bin.

□ Look for a desirable location on-site to compost or recycle landscape waste materials. Offer setting up compost bins as an additional service. It can help you manage debris on-site throughout the season and produces a fantastic useable compost material for the garden. 🈆️ = potential upsell
MARCH

☐ Recommend the homeowner performs a soil test and implement formal recommendations provided by the soil tester. See website resource list for additional information links. ($) = potential upsell

Soil Test Facility:

A & L Great Lakes Laboratories:  http://algreatlakes.com/

☐ Perform proper machine maintenance for increased efficiency and reduced emissions.

MARCH SUSTAINABILITY TIP

◊ Connect downspout to rain barrels and cisterns. ($) = potential upsell

The main benefit to rain barrels is to delay stormwater surge. If water usage is not needed in the garden, make sure to empty your rain barrel before the next rain event. Send this tip to your clients. See online resource:

Jim Kleinwachter, Conservation Foundation:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzGogbkA47s
APRIL

TURF

☐ Apply the first fertilizer and soil building application. This calendar recommends a 5-step program. A reasonable number of applications is between two and seven. This is dependent on the site conditions, organic vs. bridge products, client expectations, and budget.

☐ Spot seed with a diverse and high-quality seed mix. Consult the homeowner to ensure no pre-emergent was used.

☐ Apply a natural pre-emergent or no pre-emergent consistent with your written IPM program. Liquid or granular corn gluten are an option. Educate customers and offer a chemical post-emergent if crab grass extends beyond their tolerance.

☐ Discuss lawn alternatives. Decipher how the client values and utilizes the turf space. Perform a lawn audit and suggest areas that could be replaced.

PERENNIALS

☐ Physically remove weeds by hand pulling, digging or cultivating.

☐ Begin weeding by cultivating or hoeing the planting area. This practice needs to be consistently done every two weeks until mid-June to be effective.

☐ Scout for common April invasive species such as garlic mustard. See website resources.


TREES AND SHRUBS

☐ Scout for plant health problems on entire landscape (ex. tent caterpillar). Monitor crabapples and hawthorns for infection of apple scab and rust diseases.

☐ Remove any dead plants or dead branches to reduce disease.
  - When possible, mechanical or hand removal of pests should be done before any spray treatments.

☐ Root feed plants with a compost tea injection or organic fertilizer application.

IRRIGATION

☐ Start the irrigation system. Check all equipment for proper operation. Set the controller. Turn controller to the OFF position. Most landscapes (in the metro Chicagoland area) do not need any additional watering in the month of April.

☐ Identify and repair all irrigation leaks.

☐ Educate client on proper irrigation schedules based on rainfall throughout the growing season.

☐ Perform, or at a minimum suggest, an irrigation system audit. See website resource list for additional information links 📂 = potential upsell

  Irrigation Association: www.irrigation.org

  Create a site plan and develop a weekly watering schedule and monthly inspection schedule.
GENERAL

☐ Harvest client compost bins from the previous season. Passive compost bins can be harvested once a year and applied to vegetable gardens and high priority garden areas. Harvest bottom 3rd of the bin using a screening device. Put the top material back in the compost bin.

☐ Perform proper machine maintenance for increased efficiency and reduced emissions.

APRIL SUSTAINABILITY TIP

☑ Try to use the landscape waste onsite as mulch or compost. Use a permitted landscape waste recycling/composting facility. Use a facility that creates sustainable byproducts (mulch, compost) if hauling offsite.
TURF

☐ Apply the second fertilizer and soil building application (step 2 of 5).

☐ Mulch lawn clippings. This will require a high-functioning mulching kit and strong communication to the clients.

☐ Raise mower blades to 3”.

☐ Sharpen blades weekly.

☐ Alternate mow pattern regularly.

☐ Commit to an alternative approach to managing dandelions and other broadleaf weeds. Use an alternative natural control method like chelated iron. Manual removal may be possible once the property is under control. If a conventional herbicide is used, apply with a targeted approach not a blanket spray.

☐ Consider charging for weed control applications under an IPM.

💰 = potential upsell

Traditional program do not upsell for weed control because herbicides are many times mixed with fertilizers. With an IPM approach you should charge for weed control. The program uses less chemicals, considers proper timing, and requires more time. See website resources:

University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources:
http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/GENERAL/whatisipm.html

Beyond Pesticides:
http://www.beyondpesticides.org/resources/safety-source-on-pesticide-providers/what-is-integrated-pest-management
Weeds on the hardscapes should be controlled with a string trimmer, hand-pulling, propane flame, or a natural non-selective weed control product.

**PERENNIALS**

- Continue to weed and cultivate every two weeks to control for weeds in the planting beds.
- Use organic stakes or discarded tree branches to stake perennials (ex. peony).
- Use this opportune time to check and hand prune vines to maintain aesthetic value.
- Encourage the client to reduce excessive annuals in favor of low maintenance perennials.

**TREES AND SHRUBS**

- Scout for disease and insect issues.
- Amend soil around plants instead of using synthetic fertilizer.
- Prune flowering trees and shrubs after they are done flowering to prevent removal of flowering buds. See website resources:
  - [http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/maint/pruning.html](http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/maint/pruning.html)

**IRRIGATION**

- Continue with irrigation system startups.
☐ Fix all leaks.

☐ Turn the controllers on. Set the controllers to run if rainfall or moisture is below normal and new plantings, turf, or flowers were installed.

☐ Make sure rain shutoff sensors are operating properly.

GENERAL

☐ Perform proper machine maintenance for increased efficiency and reduced emissions.

MAY SUSTAINABILITY TIPS

☐ Use bulk materials instead of bagged products.

☐ Save your back. Use a long-handed push hoe for manual weeding. The longer the handle, the less strain on your back.

☐ Based on your IPM program and the threshold that has been set for your customers, consider a selective herbicide to eradicate weed populations and then maintain with the before mentioned procedures. This practice promotes better use of time spent on each site. Communicate with the homeowner before applying any herbicide to determine their comfort level.
**TURF**

- Apply the third fertilizer and soil building application (step 3 of 5).
- Keep mower blades at 3”.
- Sharpen blades weekly.
- Alternate mow pattern regularly.
- Continue to mulch clippings back into the lawns.
- Target spray with traditional herbicide or organic option or manually remove dandelions.
- Weeds on the hardscapes should be controlled with a string trimmer, hand-pulling, propane flame, or a natural non-selective weed control product. Manage spring weeds as mentioned in May.
- Hand-pull weeds when quantity allows.

**PERENNIALS**

- Continue to cultivate every two weeks to control for weeds in planting beds.
- Re-edge beds to discourage perennials from invading the turf and vice versa.

**TREES AND SHRUBS**

- Continue to scout for disease and insect issues.
Prune trees and shrubs at the proper time with correct cultural methods. See website resources:
http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/maint/pruning.html
http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/trees-shrubs/pruning-trees-shrubs/

Root feed plants with a compost tea injection or organic fertilizer application instead of using a synthetic fertilizer.

IRRIGATION

- Inspect irrigation system and verify all components are operational.
- Fix all leaks.
- Adjust the watering schedule as needed. June can be a huge water savings month if moisture and rainfall is sufficient for your sites needs.
- Monitor newly installed plants and supplement watering as needed.

GENERAL

- Perform proper machine maintenance for increased efficiency and reduced emissions.

JUNE SUSTAINABILITY TIP

- Avoid use of black plastic and landscape fabrics in planting beds.
TURF

☐ Alternate mow pattern regularly.

☐ Raise mower blades to 3 1/2".

☐ Sharpen blades weekly.

☐ Stop catching clippings. Continue to mulch clippings back into the lawn.

☐ Scout for and hand-pull crabgrass. Apply post-emergent herbicide only as needed.

☐ Chemical grub control is harmful and strongly discouraged. Clients should understand the difference between grub and skunk damage. Skunk damage should be mitigated with raking, watering, and over-seeding. Grub damage should be managed with organic controls.

☐ Look for fungal damage. Educate the client on the telltale signs for fungal damage.

☐ Don’t mow during periods of drought if turf has gone dormant.

PERENNIALS

☐ Continue cultivating and hand pulling weeds.

☐ Re-edge beds to discourage perennials from invading the turf and vice versa.

TREES AND SHRUBS

☐ Continue to scout for disease and insect issues.
Prune trees and shrubs at their proper time with correct cultural methods. See website resources:

http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/maint/pruning.html

http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/trees-shrubs/pruning-trees-shrubs/

IRRIGATION

- Inspect irrigation system and verify all components are operational.
- Fix all leaks.
- Adjust controller. Typically, July will require an additional day of watering or 20% longer run times.
- Evaluate if irrigation is needed for established planting beds and propose changes as required.

SNOW

- Research deicing products and talk to your suppliers. Consider various families of deicers including:
  - Rock salts (NaCl): popular deicer. Salt can damage turf and harm plant material. Salt accumulates and causes the soil structure to break down and cause compaction. Salt runs off into waterways and can harm wildlife and aquatic plants. Salt is damaging to vehicles and asphalt. Salt is not effective in temperatures below 15 degrees Fahrenheit.
Calcium chloride (CaCl2) and magnesium chloride (MgCl2): these are typically less corrosive than rock salt and work in temperatures below 15 degrees.

Liquid deicers: salt combined with liquid deicers is a better alternative than straight salt. Salt usage can be dropped by 25-30% which has economic and environmental benefits.

GENERAL

- Perform proper machine maintenance for increased efficiency and reduced emissions.

JULY SUSTAINABILITY TIP

- Price out the cost of installing low-maintenance plantings in place of high cost turf and shrubs and present the findings to the customer.
TURF

☐ Apply the fourth fertilizer and soil building application (step 4 of 5).

☐ August is the beginning of fall, not the end of summer. Over-seeding and aerating may begin after August 15th. The next two months are ideal for improving turf density and the overall health of the lawn.

☐ Discuss with the client: aerating, over-seeding, and compost top-dressing. 🈀 = potential upsell

☐ Spot spray post-emergent herbicide only when weed pressure exceeds client’s expectations using natural methods.

PERENNIALS

☐ Remove weeds by hand pulling only as needed.

TREES AND SHRUBS

☐ Prune trees and shrubs at their proper time with correct cultural methods. See website resources:

http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/maint/pruning.html

http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/trees-shrubs/pruning-trees-shrubs/
IRRIGATION

☐ Inspect irrigation system and verify all components are operational.

☐ Fix all leaks.

☐ Look at long range forecast and adjust controller back to “normal” or 100% settings if temperatures and moisture levels are sufficient for your sites needs.

☐ August is a perfect time to perform an Irrigation Audit. ₪ = potential upsell

☐ Propose changes to the site’s irrigation system to demonstrate water savings and return on investment (ROI).

GENERAL

☐ Perform proper machine maintenance for increased efficiency and reduced emissions.

AUGUST SUSTAINABILITY TIP

.pageSize
SEPTEMBER

TURF

☐ Core-aerate. Top-dress with locally produced organic material.
☐ Over-seed with diverse and high-quality seed mix.
☐ Lower blades to 3”.
☐ Sharpen blades.
☐ Alternate mow pattern regularly.

PERENNIALS

☐ Remove weeds by hand pulling as needed.
☐ Re-edge beds to discourage perennials from invading the turf and vice versa.
☐ Split, transplant and/or remove large and underperforming perennials.

TREES AND SHRUBS

☐ Remove dead or damaged branches as needed.
☐ Prune trees and shrubs at their proper time with correct cultural methods.
   See website resources:
   http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/maint/pruning.html
   http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/trees-shrubs/pruning-trees-shrubs/
☐ Root feed plants with a compost tea injection or organic fertilizer application.
IRRIGATION

☐ Inspect irrigation system and verify all components are operational.

☐ Fix all leaks.

☐ Adjust the watering schedule as needed. September should typically run below “average settings”, meaning you can eliminate a day of irrigation or set at 80% of set times.

SNOW

☐ Develop a snow plan for each site. The snow plan will include:

☐ Determine what equipment will be used for the site and how that equipment will approach the site. Plow trucks, skid steers, and front-end loaders may be used given the needs of the site.

☐ Discuss with the property manager how best to store equipment onsite. Keep in mind that the equipment should be easily accessible.

  o Consider a backup plan for various types of snow events (ex. wet snow will clog machines).

☐ Identify where snow piles will be placed during periods of high volume. The lowest area is the ideal location to relocate snow (detention or retention pond).

☐ Consider plant material when identifying a snow storage site.
GENERAL

☐ September can be an ideal time to plant new perennials, trees, and shrubs in the garden. Plants are able to take advantage of fall rains and warmer temperatures in order to get their root systems established before winter.

☐ Perform proper machine maintenance for increased efficiency and reduced emissions.

SEPTEMBER SUSTAINABILITY TIP

ドレス Ask yourself if you are using the right tool for the task and right size equipment for the job site. Using equipment that is too large or small can cost you time and money. Perform an inventory of all tools your maintenance crew uses.
TURF

- Market a late fall weed control program to the client. This allows for some herbicide use because the lawn will be used less in the fall than in the summer. Purdue University showed that late fall weed control yields tremendous results.
  - $ = potential upsell
- Lower blades to 2 ½” for the last cut of the season.
- Consider reattaching grass-catchers for leaf removal. If you do this apply material into beds or the compost bin.

PERENNIALS

- Remove annual and herbaceous plant material and mulch or compost on-site.
- Consider leaving dead plant material standing for winter interest. Native species in particular provide important overwintering habitat for various points in the life cycle of a broad variety of native pollinators.

TREES AND SHRUBS

- Remove dead or damaged limbs as needed.
- Prune trees and shrubs at their proper time with correct cultural methods.
  See website resources:

  - [http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/maint/pruning.html](http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/maint/pruning.html)
IRRIGATION

☐ Shut irrigation system down for winter.
☐ Fix leaks at shut down or propose for spring of next year.
☐ Update irrigation site plans and notes.

SNOW

☐ Prepare for the season by performing proper machine maintenance and investigating organic alternatives to de-icing agents.
☐ Review all snow personnel routing and determine the most efficient route plan. Use an internet mapping program to make sure fuel and time are on your side during a snow event.
☐ Meet with snow personnel to review the snow operations plan and procedures.
☐ Identify what sites will require hand-shoveling of walks and drives. Hand-shoveling should be utilized when possible as long as it does not interfere with public safety or the safety of the snow personnel.

GENERAL

☐ Perform proper machine and tool maintenance for increased efficiency and reduced emissions.
OCTOBER SUSTAINABILITY TIP

Price out the cost of replacing plants with high maintenance needs with ones that will thrive on their own. Consider increasing the number of plants in each bed to reduce the area of exposed soil which will help with weed control. Present findings to the customer.
TURF

☐ Apply 5th and final fertilization and soil building application.

☐ Remove leaves from turf every 10 days by mulching/recycling them onsite. Reduce or eliminate dependence on municipal leaf removal.

☐ Do not mow turf when frost is present.

☐ Leave turf areas clean and free of all landscape debris in order to reduce disease.

PERENNIALS

☐ Apply leaf compost as species require.

☐ Trim down weak or broken plants. Leave the plant if it will remain standing over winter.

TREES AND SHRUBS

☐ Prune trees and shrubs at their proper time with correct cultural methods. See website resources:

http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/maint/pruning.html

http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/trees-shrubs/pruning-trees-shrubs/
IRRIGATION

☐ Ensure irrigation system is shut-down to prevent freezing.
☐ Update irrigation site plans and notes.
☐ Propose to repair any leaks or suggest repairs for the following year.
☐ Educate your customer on water savings.

GENERAL

☐ Complete the fall clean up. Leaves should be shredded and left onsite. Many leaves can be mulched into the lawn. Remaining leaves can be shredded and applied into the beds. Additional leaves may be composted.
☐ Perform proper machine and tool maintenance for increased efficiency and reduced emissions.
☐ Disconnect downspout from rain barrels and cisterns to prevent ice damage. Reconnect downspout to overflow system.

SNOW

☐ Route plow trucks and shovel crews to save fuel and labor costs.
☐ Evaluate each site to determine the most efficient procedure for snow removal.
☐ Place snow stakes on properties to prevent damage from equipment and to identify fire hydrants.
Create a deicing plan for each site. The best deicer for that site will consider:

1.) The product is the most cost effective option for the site.
2.) The product is desired by the client given their use of the site.
3.) The product has environmental benefits or at least minimizes environmental harm.

Coat rock salt with a salt brine solution (where appropriate). The liquid on the salt keep the salt on the paved surfaces where it belongs. The combination also allows it to be used in colder temperatures.

Pre-treat paved surfaces with a liquid brine solution prior to the snow event. This will melt snow when it lands resulting in less snow on the surface. Liquid brine is less corrosive and will last for a few days.

NOVEMBER SUSTAINABILITY TIP

Price out the cost of replacing weak and diseased trees and shrubs compared to continuing treatment and present the findings to the customer.
TURF

☐ Dormant seed. Light snow cover provides excellent protection and insulation for grass seed. Speak to the client about a dormant seeding application. $ = potential upsell

PERENNIALS

☐ Develop a perennial maintenance plan for the following year based on the success/failure of previous year’s beds.

TREES AND SHRUBS

☐ Begin dormant pruning. Thin shrubs to reduce the size of mature shrubs.

IRRIGATION

☐ Ensure systems have been shut down.
☐ Propose any and all changes to be more efficient.
☐ Educate customers on the importance of water as a valuable resource. Any and all reduction helps us conserve this natural resource.

GENERAL

☐ Perform proper machine maintenance for increased efficiency and reduced emissions.
☐ Winterize landscape machinery.
SNOW

☐ Reevaluate operations to determine what changes can be made to save time and materials.

☐ If deicing products are used, use as little as possible and use liquid melting agents. Liquid melting agents should have organic materials to melt ice. Avoid over-salting as it has environmental and economic drawbacks.

DECEMBER SUSTAINABILITY TIP

receive an email to the client to summarize the changes in your annual maintenance program.

- Highlight the successes.
- Follow up with the client on the costs presented by you for replacement of high maintenance plant material in the following year.
- Thank them for their business and wish them happy holidays.
WEBSITE RESOURCE LINKS

TURF

IPM-Integrated Pest Management

University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources:
http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/GENERAL/whatisipm.html

Beyond Pesticides:
http://www.beyondpesticides.org/resources/safety-source-on-pesticide-providers/what-is-integrated-pest-management

Soil Testing Labs

A & L Great Lakes Laboratories:  http://algreatlakes.com/

PERENNIALS

Perennial and Native Plant Resources


Missouri Botanical Garden: http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/

Lady Bird Johnson National Wildflower Center:  http://www.wildflower.org/

American Beauties Native Plants: http://www.abnativeplants.com/

Pollinator Friendly Plant Lists:  http://www.xerces.org/pollinator-conservation/plant-lists/
WEBSITE RESOURCE LINKS

INVASIVE PLANTS RESOURCES

Midwest Invasive Plant Network:  http://www.mipn.org/

Chicago Botanic Gardens:  http://www.chicagobotanic.org/research/identifying_threats/invasive


TREES AND SHRUBS

Planting Advice:  

Tree Selection

Chicago Botanic Garden: 
http://www.chicagobotanic.org/plantinfo/tree_alternatives

Morton Arboretum Community Trees Program: 
http://www.mortonarb.org/trees-plants/community-trees-program

PRUNING

University of Minnesota:  
http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/maint/pruning.html

http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/trees-shrubs/pruning-trees-shrubs/
WEBSITE RESOURCE LINKS

IRRIGATION

Training and Education

Irrigation Association: www.irrigation.org
Hunter Industries: www.hunterindustries.com
Rainbird Corporation: www.rainbird.com

Irrigation Audit

Irrigation Association: www.irrigation.org

Water Sense

Water Use It Wisely: www.wateruseitwisely.com
EPA Watersense: www.epa.gov/watersense

SUSTAINABILITY TIP

Rain Barrel Installation

Jim Kleinwachter, Conservation Foundation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzGogbkA47s
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

THE ILCA SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING COMMITTEE

Formed by ILCA Board resolution in 2009, the mission of the Sustainable Landscaping Committee is to develop programs and initiatives that educate and inform the green industry on sustainable landscaping practices. The Committee is comprised of contractors and suppliers to the landscape industry who want to implement sustainable practices. It is part of a growing national effort in landscaping to create aesthetically pleasing landscapes while improving and conserving the environment.

Committee Members

**Sustainable Landscaping Committee: Draft III**

Chairman: Jeff Swano, Dig Right In Landscaping, Inc.
Dennis Clarke, Scott Byron & Co.
Jessica Riedell, CLT, Bright View
Barb Schwarz, Nature’s Perspective Landscaping
Brandon Losey, Ringer’s Landscape Service Inc.
Alex Mayfield, JM Irrigation
Trish Beckjord, Midwest Groundcovers
Steve Neumann, Logic Lawn Care
Tom Lupfer – Board Advisor, Lupfer Landscaping

**Sustainable Landscaping Committee: Draft II**

Chairman: Tom Lupfer, CLT, Lupfer Landscaping
Jim Gorsline, Scott Byron & Co.
Catalino Mendoza, Midwest Groundcovers
Jessica Riedell, CLT, The Brickman Group
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Brandon Losey, Ringer’s Landscape Service Inc.
Ed Beaulieu, Aquascape
Kevin Hebert, Kevin’s Rain Gardens
Trish Beckjord, Midwest Groundcovers
Lisa Fiore – Board Liaison, Fiore Nursery and Landscape Supply

Sustainable Landscaping Committee: Draft I
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Jim Gorsline, Scott Byron & Co.
Mike Martin, Muellermist
Catalino Mendoza, Midwest Groundcovers
Jessica Riedell, CLT, Brickman
Barb Schwarz, Nature’s Perspective Landscaping
Dave Singler, Rolling Landscapes
Mark Toms, Western DuPage Landscaping
Christa Orum-Keller – Board Liaison, Midwest Groundcovers