

## Songbird Gardening Challenge

“Replace 25% of your lawn with native trees and shrubs.”

NOTE: This document is Part I. of the songbird gardening challenge. Afterwards, please click on Part II. - “How to Reduce Your Lawn.” and see how easy it is!



*Spring* Front Yard



*Summer* Front Yard



A Corner of *Fall* Front Yard (My favorite!)

Why bother?

To help meet the survival needs of our migratory songbirds during spring and fall migration. The native trees and shrubs provide berries, seeds, insects and shelter from hawk predation.

Lawns, unless planted with native grasses, are environmentally and ecologically unsound. Lawns are monocultures, composed of a single species of grass meant for European

climates. Without a variety of grass species and in turn, insect species, lawns are highly prone to pest infestations. They are high-maintenance, costly, energy intensive, and environmentally problematic. “Lawns are responsible for 50% of water use in summer months and an hour of lawn mower use emits the same amount in air pollutants as driving a car for 600 km,”\* not to mention noise pollution. Lawns require the intensive use of pesticides, fertilizers, water and frequent cutting in order to maintain a “bowling ball” appearance.

At a time when biodiversity is at an all-time low due to loss of habitat through urbanization and pesticide-use (urban and agricultural), we continue to hear how our own future and well-being is dependent on a healthy and diverse ecology.\* Doesn't it make sense to put away environmentally-destructive gardening practices and do what we can to embrace nature?

After racing around all week buying groceries, taking kids to extra-curricular activities, clamoring to meet deadlines at work, do you really want to give up your Sunday to maintain a lawn? (I remember feeling quite horrified to hear someone say they enjoy cutting the lawn every week, whether or not it needs it, because the lull of the gas motor and the repetitious back and forth action put them into a relaxing, trance-like state! Isn't that what yoga is for? Can we not get that same feeling from simply sitting back and relaxing on a property that supports nature!)

When you plant *for* nature, incorporating native species of trees and shrubs, nature steps in to maintain the garden for your enjoyment. Native trees and shrubs come in a variety of species and heights adding increased visual interest to your property, year-round. (Please visit, “Fantastic Fall Natives” in the photo gallery.) They can even reduce your energy bills and increase the value of your property. Foremost, they provide habitat for wildlife, supporting numerous species including our resident and migratory songbirds. (Remember, these species, be they pollinators or songbirds have no interest in interacting with us. They are simply trying to survive and can do so if given half the chance. They have evolved with native species and rely on them, foremost, for food and shelter. You provide a water source!) Native plant species have a symbiotic relationship with the environment. They are drought tolerant, require no pesticides or fertilizers and most importantly, support the survival of biodiversity transforming our sterile properties often composed of foreign species into living ecosystems teaming with life and the excitement of new discoveries, daily.

Please take up the challenge and transform a minimum of 25% of your lawn into an oasis for nature. Wait 'til you see how easy it is to do!

**Please send me the before and after photos and tell me about your experiences gardening with nature. Thank you.**

\*1. – [www.davidsuzuki.org](http://www.davidsuzuki.org)

\* 2.- Our pollinator populations are weak due, foremost, to loss of habitat rich in a diversity of species and pesticide use in agriculture. We depend on pollinators for most of our food supply!