**Sustainable Business Ideas: Land Use**

Many companies have some green space around their facility, often a considerable amount. Many companies manicure and landscape this land to make the best appearance. Others simply mow it without giving much thought, leaving just open space. These practices may involve quite frequent mowing and the use of herbicides, as well as extensive watering. How this aspect of the company policy is handled is critical for sustainability. Environmental landscapers can offer much to provide ideas and services. We can think not only about environmentally-friendly practices but also about the ways the land can be used for the enhancement of the people, either employees or the community.

Here are some ideas for land use and best practices.

* Use of native grasses that require less mowing and less watering.
* There are mowers that have 360 degrees turning to avoid unnecessary wide turns that increase fuel use over a large area.
* Employ alternative ways to do lawn care that do not involve herbicides or toxic fertilizers. These eco-friendly lawn care practices are widely available.
* Make some of the land into a prairie.
* If there are wetlands, find ways to preserve these and feature them.
* Rain gardens and bioswales will help protect the watershed.
* Butterfly gardens to attract and protect the threatened monarch butterfly.
* Special plants on slopes to prevent erosion.
* Native shrubs and flowers for beauty.All native planting will draw other native life—birds, small mammals, and so on. See Douglas Tallamy, *Bringing Nature Home*. Identify trees, flowers, and shrubs, along with birds that people are likely to see, for employees to know them.
* Planting trees: these can be placed near the building to moderate heat and cold. Native trees also attract native life. Trees serve many functions we often do not consider: mitigate storm water runoff, carbon sequestration, clean the air, absorb pollution, enhance beauty, raise property values.
* Many companies are required to have a retention pond on their property. These can be made to attract native life and serve the community. For example, depending on the size, they can have walking paths around them with benches and even be used for fishing. Trees and shrubs can make them quite attractive.
* For storm water runoff, consider permeable pavement. Or punctuate a parking lot with trees or small raingardens here and there. Put bioswales along runoff areas to absorb water.
* Bike racks to encourage eco-friendly transportation.
* Walking/ bicycle paths around the property for employees to exercise on their breaks or facilitate biking to work. Could even provide some “Bikes for Breaks.”
* Consider a pavilion and picnic tables for employees to enjoy the out of doors on breaks.
* The company can put out plots for employees to have small gardens to grow vegetables for home or a local food bank. Maybe even a hoop house or green house for plants in winter.
* If building new offices or a plant, consider some floor to ceiling windows that look out over natural areas for the health and well-being of employees.
* Even the smallest piece of land can be used in sustainable ways. Think like a park!

The business might think of the property as an Earth community, a location they share with plants and animals, with air, soil, and water. One school included pictures of some trees and birds as part of thecommunity directory!

Land use and maintenance can be a significant way for a company to raise awareness among employees and in the community as to their commitment to be part of nature and to preserve (even restore) nature in the quest for sustainability.