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Homeowner Guide for Next to Nature Certification (by the Numbers)

The 5 Steps to Certification

1. Evaluate your property and Submit a [N2N Interest Form](#)
2. Make a sustainable, nature--friendly plan
3. Implement the plan (act)
4. Assess and re-evaluate. Submit a [N2N Form of Completion](#) to be evaluated and receive your certificate.
5. Maintain

The 9 Categories of Landscape Actions

1. Your N2N Place
2. Earthscape
3. Greenscape
4. Bluescape
5. Firescape
6. Airscape
7. Energyscape
8. Wastescape
9. Community

Top Ten Most Beneficial Next to Nature Actions

1. Plant native plant species, native trees (no palms please), or drought tolerant plants and trees
2. Use Water Conservation techniques to harvest rainwater and other forms of reusable water (Grey water)
3. Install a rain garden/bioswale or other actions to Prevent Erosion
4. Improve soil quality
5. Use mulch and compost
6. Encourage pollination with pesticide-free pollinator plants
7. Install feeders and shelters for appropriate wildlife of all types
8. Increase efficiency of water use
9. Create fire-safe zones, Plant fire resistant plants
10. Re-purpose materials, by both using them for constructing your renovations or donating them; purchase re-purposed products for use on your property restoration



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An Incomplete List of Possible Landscape Actions (Choose Those Most Appropriate for Your Place and Budget):

1. Your N2N Place
 - a. Assess your site (slope, topography, pathways, soils, utilities, etc.).
 - b. Identify your landscape objectives and actions to capture multiple eco-benefits.
 - c. Prepare (a) site plan(s).
2. Earthscape (Soil Health and Conservation)
 - a. Incorporate elements to slow, spread, and capture the surface flow of rainwater for infiltration and/or release, such as rain gardens, bioswales, seasonal pools, etc.
 - b. Install rain barrels to capture stormwater from structures.
 - c. Orient planting beds parallel to topographic contours to slow surface water flow.
 - d. Stabilize erodible surfaces by planting soil-holding species, applying wattles, or by physical means (grading, terracing, armoring, etc.).
 - e. Convert landscape (and food) waste into compost, biochar, mulch, etc. for use as a soil amendment.
 - f. Determine the texture, soil structure, and pH of garden soils in order to make the best improvements.
 - g. Implement practices to reduce nutrient runoff (such as slow-release fertilizers, optimized application timing and amount).
 - h. Restore previously disturbed soils.
 - i. Correct instances of soil compaction.
 - j. Reduce or eliminate the use of harmful fertilizers.
 - k. Reduce or eliminate the use of toxic chemicals.
3. Greenscape (Living Things)
 - a. Create a living landscape using soil and vegetation features, e.g. vegetated roofs, walls, or facades; rain gardens or bioswales; native species plantings; and tree canopies.
 - b. Plant trees; consider carbon capture and storage, flammability, water use, and drought tolerance.
 - c. Conserve/use native plant species where appropriate.
 - d. Eliminate invasive species.
 - e. Incorporate water in the garden to sustain living things, large and small.
 - f. Plant species with capacity to survive extreme environments.
 - g. Choose pollinator-supporting plant species.
 - h. Incorporate bird and butterfly feeders and/or nest boxes for owls and bats.
 - i. Select plant species providing appropriate fruit, seed, and nectar for wildlife from a pesticide free source.
 - j. Increase the time period habitat resources (such as cover, food) are available.
 - k. Manage vegetation health and use IPM to control pests and diseases.



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4. Bluescape (Water Quality, Conservation, and Management)
 - a. Manage precipitation on-site (cistern, rain garden, bioswale, rain barrel, bird bath, pond, seasonal pools).
 - b. Reduce water use for landscape irrigation (efficient system design, nozzles, length and timing of application).
 - c. Substitute permeable for impermeable surfaces to allow water to be absorbed into the soil.
 - d. Add organic matter to the soil (such as compost, biochar, worm castings, etc.).
 - e. Avoid/minimize the use of copper and zinc (roofs, gutters, downspouts, siding), galvanized materials (fencing, water storage), and treated lumber.
 - f. Reduce the use of potable water in the garden when safe for plants and animals by substituting less pure water types.
 - g. Create planting beds using buried tree debris (Hügelkultur), which conserves water and improves soil quality.
 - h. Use the Water Use Classification of Landscape Species checklist (WUCOLS) to select low water-requiring plants for use.
5. Firescape (Wildfire Protection)
 - a. Remove fire-prone vegetation (containing resins, oils, and waxes) and dead vegetation.
 - b. Add fire-resistant vegetation.
 - c. Create the correct types of defensible space/zones on your property, removing plants and other types of fuels.
 - d. Remove dead and dying branches; prune dead branches, palm skirts, etc.; observe local guidelines to avoid destroying nests during nesting seasons.
 - e. Avoid mulch use within the "Immediate Zone" of defensible space.
 - f. Use fire-resistant materials and products (roofing, vents, eaves, soffits, windows, decks, porches, siding).
 - g. Inspect structures; repair damaged or missing roof tiles/shingles, screen vents, etc.
 - h. Store flammable items indoors.
6. Airscape (Air Quality)
 - a. Reduce air pollution by covering/planting bare soil.
 - b. Install a vegetated windbreak to reduce air pollution.
 - c. Install insulating green roofs and walls and/or blue roofs.
 - d. Choose garden products containing no or low volatile organic compounds.
7. Energyscape (Energy Conservation)
 - a. Plant trees and shrubs as a windbreak to block prevailing cool weather winds or minimize air borne dust.
 - b. Shade dark-colored driveways, roadways, patios, walls, and roof parts that receive significant sunlight.
 - c. Use minimally processed materials such as salvaged materials from local sources, compressed earth blocks, bamboo, uncut stones, straw bales.



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- d. Install solar collectors or photovoltaic units to power outdoor landscape elements.
8. Wastescape (Landscape Material Management)
 - a. Repurpose end-of-life local wood by upcycling it into useful products, such as lumber, furniture, household items, art, fuel pellets, biochar.
 - b. Use locally sourced materials.
 - c. Use materials with recycled content.
 - d. Re-use salvaged materials and plants.
 - e. Eliminate the use of wood from threatened tree species; use certified wood.
 - f. Divert reusable vegetation, rocks, and soil from landfill disposal.
 - g. Avoid using PVC (polyvinyl chloride) because it cannot be recycled and also releases dioxin during its manufacture and disposal.
9. Community
 - a. Put in place a plan for your family in case of need to evacuate for wildfire or create protections against other natural emergencies.
 - b. Notify your neighbors and others about your disaster preparedness plan and to encourage them so you can help each other.
 - c. Share natural resources to help build a circular economy, such as leftover wood, rock, soils, plants, cuttings.
 - d. Work to make gardens, landscapes, neighborhoods, schools, or workplaces more wildlife-friendly.
 - e. Create peaceful and restful spaces and share them with others.
 - f. Share your knowledge and successful path to landscape sustainability with others, thereby assisting them to improve their own properties.
 - g. Communicate the value of the Next to Nature Program to others in your neighborhood and community.