



# Your Yard

## Living Landscapes Matter: The ABCs Of Drought-Friendly Landscapes

(NAPSA)—Living landscapes do more environmental good than many people realize.

### Go Green To Be Green

Here are just some of the benefits of protecting green spaces, starting in your own backyard:

•**Carbon dioxide.** Carbon dioxide is the single greatest cause of climate change. Fortunately, scientists say, grass is the greatest carbon sink in the country, removing about six tons of carbon dioxide per acre, per year from the atmosphere.

•**Storm water runoff.** Rain water “sheets off” hard surfaces, such as parking lots, driveways and roads, picking up pollutants as the runoff makes its way to streams, rivers and lakes. Grassy areas, however, mitigate storm water runoff, slowing down and absorbing the water while cleansing it of dust and other impurities.

•**Soil erosion.** Grass controls erosion, not only by slowing down water runoff but by holding soil in place with its natural, dense and fibrous root system.

•**Heat island effects.** According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), on a hot, sunny day, roof and pavement surface temperatures can be 50° to 90° hotter than the air. Synthetic turf, made from petroleum, can be even worse. A Brigham Young University study found synthetic turf’s temperatures were 37° higher than asphalt and 86° hotter than natural turf. Planting vegetation and grass and installing green roofs are among the strategies the EPA recommends to mitigate the heat island effect.

•**Oxygen.** Lawns are incredi-



**To help families understand their options when it comes to their yards, kid-friendly TurfMutt was created.**

ble oxygen-making machines. In fact, a 25-square-foot area of grass will supply enough oxygen to support one person for a whole day.

•**Air quality.** Research has shown that grasses remove pollutants such as carbon dioxide and ozone from the air. Grass plays a vital role in capturing dust, smoke and other harmful pollutants.

•**Play space.** Outdoor areas provide a safe place for children and pets to play and for families to enjoy. Numerous studies have demonstrated the health benefits of spending time outdoors, including improved mood and decreased anger, fatigue and depression.

•**Biodiversity.** Unlike artificial grass made of petroleum, real grass provides a habitat for birds and animals.

### What To Do About Drought

The good news is, you don’t have to lose all those benefits to drought conditions. During a drought, it’s fine to let your lawn go brown. In fact, it is part of the natural plant cycle. It will turn green again when the rains return, and even a dormant lawn provides environmental benefits, while giving kids and pets a place to play.

What’s more, buffalo and Bermuda grass and other types

require very little water, making them a smart choice for drought conditions, explains Kris Kiser, president and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), the international trade association representing the small engine, utility vehicle and outdoor power equipment manufacturing industry. “The right thing to do is to find the right plants for the right place,” urges Kiser. “Rocks, mulch, hardscapes, pavers and cactus simply don’t cut it.

“If you xeriscape and put in rock gardens and mulch and cactus, it may not provide an adequate place for pets and kids to play,” adds Kiser.

### Green Facts For Family Fun

To help families understand their options when it comes to their yards, the OPEI Education and Research Foundation came up with a kid-friendly character named TurfMutt and his sidekicks called the Outdoor Powers.

Created in partnership with Scholastic, Inc., the global children’s publishing, education and media company, TurfMutt is a national educational program for grades K through 5. The program offers fun activities and an online digital storybook for children. It’s featured on the websites of the EPA, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Green Building Council’s Center for Green Schools, and U.S. Forest Services’ Climate Change Live.

### Learn More

For more information, go to [www.opei.org/stewardship](http://www.opei.org/stewardship). To see fun ways kids can go green, visit [www.TurfMutt.com](http://www.TurfMutt.com).