



## 10 Things to Get You Started by Doug Tallamy

SMALL EFFORTS BY MANY PEOPLE: 83% of land in the U.S. is privately owned. If we planted native on 50% of private land we would restore biodiversity...and we can do it starting NOW. We greatly encourage municipalities and public places to participate, but right NOW, each of us can take an ACTION. Let's start planting.

### WHAT EACH OF US CAN DO

#### 1. SHRINK THE LAWN

Every square foot dedicated to lawn is a square foot that is degrading local ecosystems. Turfgrass offers no ecological benefits but is nice to walk on. Doug suggests that we reduce our lawns by half for walkways and paths that define beds, tree groves. Once you do this - please get on the HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK® MAP <https://map.homegrownnationalpark.org> and encourage others to do the same!

#### 2. REMOVE INVASIVE SPECIES

Invasive plants are ecological tumors that spread unchecked into our local ecosystems, castrating the ecosystem's ability to function. If every property owner removed the most egregious invasives, the goal of ridding the U.S. of these troublemakers, or at least reducing their seed rain to manageable levels, would be largely realized.

#### 3. PLANT KEYSTONE GENERA

Doug's research at the University of Delaware has shown that a few genera of native plants, or keystone genera, form the backbone of local ecosystems, particularly in terms of producing the food that fuels insects.

Landscapes that do not contain one or more species from keystone genera will have failed food webs, even if the diversity of other plants is very high. To find the keystone plants that host the most caterpillars and native bees, visit <https://www.nwf.org/Garden-for-Wildlife/About/Native-Plants/keystone-plants-by-ecoregion>.

#### 4. BE GENEROUS WITH YOUR PLANTINGS

To realize the ecological potential of our landscapes, most of us have to increase the abundance and diversity of our plantings. If you have one tree in your yard, consider

adding two more. The idea is to plant groves of trees at the same density at which they occur naturally in a forest.

## 5. REDUCE YOUR NIGHTTIME LIGHT POLLUTION

Research is showing that our porch and security lights are major causes of insect decline. Consider turning off your lights at night. Or **use motion sensor security lights** that light up only when an intruder enters your yard. If nothing else, replace the white bulb in your lights with yellow tinted bulbs (yellow LED bulbs are the best). Yellow wavelengths are the least attractive to nocturnal insects.

## 6. NETWORK WITH NEIGHBORS & GET ON THE HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK® MAP

Be a role model for your neighbors. As you transform your property by planting natives in tasteful ways, it is likely your neighbors will follow suit. Whatever your size property, adding your neighbor's yard to Homegrown National Park® MAP

<https://map.homegrownnationalpark.org> begins the process of building ecological networks and moves us closer to the national goal of replacing 20 million acres of lawn. . For a Homegrown National Park Yard Sign: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/yard-sign>

## 7. BUILD A CONSERVATION HARDSCAPE (*you don't have to be a gardener!*)

- Each year millions of toads, frogs, and other small creatures become trapped in our window wells where they slowly starve to death. Installing cheap **window well covers** can reduce these needless deaths to zero.
- Set your **mower height no lower than 3 inches**. This will give you healthier, greener grass that requires less watering but also mows safely over a box turtle or toad! Try not to mow in the evening when many nocturnal species leave their hiding places.
- Install a bubbler. Small water features with gentle gurgling sounds are irresistible to migrating and resident birds.

## 8. CREATE CATERPILLAR PUPATION SITES UNDER YOUR TREES

More than 90% of the caterpillars that develop on trees drop to the ground and pupate within the duff on the ground or within chambers they form underground. It is best to replace lawn under trees with well-planted beds with groundcovers appropriate for your area. It's easy, you can leave leaf litter under your trees, rocks, and old tree stumps, as well as plant wild ginger, foam flowers, wood poppies, native pachysandra, ferns, mayapples, etc.

## 9. DO NOT SPRAY OR FERTILIZE

Insecticides and herbicides are antithetical to the goals of HOMEGROWN NATIONAL

PARK. Less evident is that fertilizers are also unnecessary. Creating soils rich in organic matter is entirely sufficient for healthy plants.

#### 10. EDUCATE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD CIVIC ASSOCIATION – Start a new **HABITAT®**

Many homeowners believe they cannot use more native plants in their landscape because of rules developed and enforced by their township, civic association or homeowner association. These rules are likely dated as they were created when we didn't know then what we do now. HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK includes Start a new **HABITAT®** in how we landscape. The “new luxury landscape” is one of meadows and/or formal native planted gardens – it is no longer rolling green lawns.

[www.homegrownnationalpark.org](http://www.homegrownnationalpark.org)

