

Improving Pollinator Habitat in Homeowners Associations (HOAs)

Landscaping. Use lots of plants with at least [70% natives](#). Ground covers, annuals, perennials, shrubs, and trees.

Mow less lawn. Grass is great for gatherings and games. Eliminate it where it is not needed. Permit [individual gardens](#) or a [community vegetable garden](#).

Eliminate insecticides. Grubex kills the larval stage of many insects including [beneficial insects](#). It is often used to deter moles, assuming that if moles don't have grubs to eat, they will leave. This is inaccurate. The moles will adjust their diet to include worms. Many devices and treatments are advertised for the purpose of repelling moles. They may be less toxic, but they are also ineffective. Moles can be kept out of small gardens with hardware cloth. It is not legal in Vermont to trap and move furred animals.

Eliminate herbicides + fungicides. These will kill the [mycelium](#) that connects the grass with other plants to make the lawn stronger. If the lawn is sparse, spread a thin layer of compost and over seed annually. Use a diverse mix of seeds appropriate to your soil and climate. A thick lawn resists weed invasion.

Test the soil and fertilize according to need. Most lawns do not need phosphorus and it can be washed into streams and lakes causing [algal blooms](#). Set the mower at 3 ½ to 4 inches and leave the clippings in place. Sharp mower blades cause less injury to the grass.

New HOAs may have [stormwater retention ponds](#). These slow runoff from paved roads and driveways. These must be surrounded by vegetation but not lawn. Check local laws. You may be required to have no vegetation larger than 2 inches diameter within 15 feet of the toe of the detention pond and within 25 feet of the spillway. Access for heavy equipment to do any needed repairs may be required. These requirements can be met with brush hogging as little as every 3 years. The area further out that was cleared to create the stormwater retention pond may be allowed to return to forest.

Leach fields will not function properly with deep rooted plantings over them, but they do not need to be mowed weekly. This may be extended to every 2 weeks or even twice per year to support [pollinator habitat](#).

Prepared by UVM Extension Master Gardener Karen Burke, May 2021. For more information on the UVM Extension Master Gardener Program visit the UVM Extension Community Horticulture [website](#).