

# MEADOWMONT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

## LANDSCAPING GUIDELINES

MAY 2009

We believe that most residents of Meadowmont chose to live here because of its unique design concept: A walkable community with a well defined and vibrant community center and containing a variety of unique architectural style homes compatible with the existing architecture of Chapel Hill.

Home designs incorporate many energy saving features as well as provisions to ensure that the indoor air meets the highest quality standards ensuring healthy living conditions.

The Meadowmont Community Association will continue to be committed to the principles of sustainability and is asking its residents to assist in implementing these principles in the overall landscaping design.

These principles include (but are not limited to):

- The proper selection of turf and where appropriate the replacement of turf with plant material to reduce the need for watering and eliminate the need for mowing, trimming and blowing, which are large contributors to air and noise pollution.
- The proper selection of draught tolerant plant material and the avoidance and elimination of invasive plants. For a listing of invasive plants go to: [www.ncwildflower.org/invasives/list.htm](http://www.ncwildflower.org/invasives/list.htm)
- The reduction in the use of harmful pesticides and herbicides, which due to the steep terrain in many places, will wind up in our storm drains and creeks. Organic alternatives are now available and residents are urged to look for them and insist that their contractors use them. Maintaining and where possible improving our tree cover, as it absorbs carbon dioxide.

The Meadowmont Architectural Review Committee is ready to assist residents in making the right choices as well as ensuring that landscaping in general will meet the attractive design criteria established by the Community Association. We also encourage residents to discuss these guidelines with their respective landscaper and/or maintenance contractor.

Any significant (more than 20 sq.) changes in or additions to existing landscaping of homes in Meadowmont will need approval from the Architectural Review Committee. Application forms are available on the website ([www.meadowmont.net](http://www.meadowmont.net)). Detailed sketches of the changes including site plan, new plant material etc. must be submitted with the application.

Examples of changes requiring MARC approval are:

- Changes or additions to existing landscaping, (planting beds, grass areas)
- Changes involving tree cutting (see 3.1)

### 1. Lawns:

In general large areas of lawn (more than 50% of the landscaped area) are discouraged because of:

- The need of watering by hand, sprinklers or with irrigation systems. Water is one of our scarce resources and even though our reserves are currently sufficient even a short draught could change this rapidly.
- The need for mowing, edging and blowing of loose grass. A typical lawnmower used 25 hours per year can emit as much greenhouse gas as driving a car 2500 miles. Edge trimmers and blowers can be worse. In addition trimmers and blowers are disturbingly noisy.

- The high cost of maintenance.

Individual homeowner will decide if and how much lawn they will have, but if lawns are installed and maintained, the following guidelines may be helpful:

- 1.1 The use of fescue grass is generally recommended for seeding or re-seeding. Ryegrass can be considered, but only when erosion control is of concern and when seeding is necessary outside of normal germination periods for other species.
- 1.2 Bermuda grass is draught tolerant and will stay green during the summer. However, it is extremely invasive.
- 1.3 Numerous types of Zoysia (i.e. El Toro) are substitutes for Bermuda and can be cut with a rotary mower.
- 1.4 Different adjacent species of grasses along the property lines shall be separated with a minimum 2 feet wide planting bed as coordinated into the overall landscaping design of the lot(s)
- 1.5 OWASA guidelines must be followed at all times, which include the amount of watering, time of watering, method of watering and the requirement for properly operating rain gauges on irrigation systems. [www.owasa.org](http://www.owasa.org) or 919-968-4421.
- 1.6 The use of organic fertilizer such as Corn Gluten and over-seeding will help to keep lawns (and our streams) healthy.
- 1.7 Grass should be cut to 2 ½" – 3" above the soil line to shade the soil and keep weeds from establishing themselves. Short grass promotes a shallow root system. Remove no more than 40% of grass height in one mowing. Mulching while cutting will save time and help keep the grass healthy.
- 1.8 In accordance with Chapel Hill ordinances, the operation of motorized lawn maintenance equipment (including lawnmowers, blowers, etc) is only allowed Mon.-Fri. from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## 2. **Plantings:**

Plantings, provided they are done properly, can be very attractive, create diversity, require less maintenance, prevent water run-off and are much more environmentally friendly.

Initial plantings or significant changes in the landscaping must be approved by the MARC.

A listing of recommended plant material is available upon request. The following website also contains a lot of valuable information: [www.ncbg.unc.edu](http://www.ncbg.unc.edu)

Plantings are allowed within 2 feet of the mailboxes.

## 3. **Trees:**

This is another one of our valuable resources, which must be nurtured and protected. Not only because of their capacity to absorb carbon dioxide but also because they keep the air cooler (heat sinks are an increasing problem in urban areas with high density construction and large impervious areas) and their slow regulated release of rainwater.

- 3.1 To protect our tree cover in Meadowmont the MCA will require that any cutting of trees exceeding the following dimensions (in dbh or diameter at breast height) will need approval from the MARC:
  - For native Carolinian tree species: 6" dbh
  - For pine trees: 18" dbh
  - For any other tree: 12" dbh
- 3.2 Excessive mulch build-up on the trunks of trees encourages insect infestation and encourages root growth near or above the surface. Many street trees in Meadowmont have died as a result of this build-up. Mulch should be pulled away a couple of inches from the trunk and not be allowed to build up over time.

- 3.3 Planting and maintenance of street trees immediately adjacent to the curb is the responsibility of the MCA. It would be appreciated however, if the homeowner would assist in watering during the summer.

#### 4. Structures:

##### 4.1 General:

Additions and alterations to existing dwellings, decks, patios, porches, gazebos, storage sheds, playhouses or play equipment, fences, retaining walls, mailboxes, satellite dishes, etc. require MARC submittal, review and approval. Refer to the existing Architectural Guidelines.

##### 4.2 Rain Barrels:

Rain Barrels are valuable in conserving water and their use is encouraged. Installations of Rain barrels do not need MARC approval, provided they are:

- No larger than 80 gallons
- Dark colored (black, dark green, dark brown, etc)
- Fully screened from visibility from the street and adjacent property

Below grade rain/water storage systems must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Caution:** Although Rain Barrels are very beneficial they are not totally carefree. ¼" of rain on a 20' X 20' roof will fill up a 65-gallon barrel. Most of them have an overflow valve to be attached to a standard garden hose. However, in heavy rain this hose will often be too small to handle the amount of water with the result that these barrels will overflow. They should therefore not be placed in areas where an overflow of water could be damaging to a foundation or other structure.

##### 4.3 Composters:

Composters are invaluable in generating excellent soil/compost and reducing the use of kitchen garbage disposal units, which waste water and put a strain on the municipal waste treatment facilities.

They must be placed at the rear of the lot in such a way that they are fully screened from visibility from the street and adjacent properties and must not generate offensive odors

- Kitchen waste Composters must be fully enclosed and protected against intrusion by animals.
- Garden waste Composters must be no larger than 6 sq.ft.