

Over the past few years you may have noticed changes in the way some of our parks and open spaces are being maintained. These changes may be related to a practice known as "Naturalization".

Naturalization is a process where a disturbed site is allowed to return to a natural state. This promotes a return of ecological function and provides valuable habitat for flora and fauna. In many cases native plant species are re-introduced into these designated areas.

The City of Winnipeg is committed to protecting the health of our natural environment and ensuring these areas are functional for both wildlife and people to enjoy.



**For questions or concerns regarding Naturalization please contact:**



Naturalist Services Branch  
Parks and Open Space Division  
Public Works Department  
5006 Roblin Blvd.  
Winnipeg, MB R3R 0G7  
<http://winnipeg.ca/publicworks/naturalist/ns>



**Parks and Open Space Division**



**NATURALIZATION AND NO-MOW ZONES**



# Naturalization can make a forest or prairie come alive again!



## Types of Naturalization

### **No-Mow or Reduced Mowing:**

Eliminating mowing, reducing mowing or raising the height of cut are used primarily in the following situations:

- Along waterways such as rivers and creeks to provide vegetation that will improve water quality while also providing deeper roots to reduce erosion.
- Along existing natural areas, reducing or eliminating mowing can provide a buffer zone that encourages native plant species to spread.
- Where native species persist, to allow important and attractive prairie flowers and grasses that have been suppressed by regular mowing to flourish.

### **Prairie and Wetland Restoration:**

Prairie grasslands and naturalized retention ponds are being re-introduced to protect our natural diversity, add beauty to our surroundings and improve our water quality.

### **Tree Planting:**

Each year, thousands of trees are planted along waterways to reduce erosion, improve stream habitat and create wildlife habitat.

## Common Plants of Naturalization Areas

### **Herbaceous Species:**

Goldenrod, Aster, Fleabane, Wild Licorice, Prairie Sage, Milkweed, Bedstraw, False Solomon's Seal, Canada Anemone, Sedge, Rush, Big Bluestem

### **Trees and Shrubs:**

Manitoba Maple, Green Ash, Bur Oak, Trembling Aspen, Chokecherry, Red Osier Dogwood, High Bush Cranberry

### **Undesirable species:**

Canada Thistle, Dandelion, Sow Thistle, Smooth Brome Grass, Quack Grass, Sweet Clover, Burdock

## Some Challenges...

Naturalization is a long-term process and some areas can take many years to develop into vibrant and diverse natural communities.

The initial phases of naturalization can result in weed problems. In the early transitional stage, invasive plants such as Canada thistle may take advantage of a no-mow environment and become abundant. Mechanical methods including hand pulling or cutting are often required to control these. Eventually, the transition will lead to a more stable and diverse collection of native plants, and weeds will be reduced.

Litter can also become a problem in some areas when vegetation collects wind-blown paper or plastic refuse. Dumping trash, grass clippings or other garden waste into these areas is illegal and also problematic. Through proper garbage disposal, composting yard waste and not littering, everyone can do their part to prevent and help solve these problems..

The benefits of these natural areas to our well-being and the health of our environment outweigh potential problems. With continued commitment from the Parks and Open Space Division, our natural landscape will be fostered and preserved for the future.



## Ecological Benefits

### **Protects Natural Heritage**

Naturalization preserves majestic forests, reintroduces prairie grasses and wildflowers, and restores healthy wetlands. This process allows vibrant Manitoba plant communities to remain integrated in our urban environment and protected for future generations.

### **Improves Stream Health and Riverbank Stability**

Restoring natural vegetation along riverbanks filters pollutants, reduces erosion and provides a healthier environment for fish and other aquatic species.

For more information on what you can do, see [www.livingbywater.ca](http://www.livingbywater.ca).

### **Increases Biodiversity**

Natural areas provide a place for a wide variety of wildflowers, trees and shrubs. These plants attract and sustain a diversity of birds and butterflies.

### **Enhances Water Quality**

Natural wetlands and naturalized retention basins remove nutrients and pollutants from run off water before it can flow downstream into our rivers and lakes.