

Precedents in Bylaw Reform in Canadian Municipalities re: Naturalized Yards and Gardens

Provided are six examples of recent updates to municipal bylaws to better support local biodiversity through the establishment of naturalized yards and habitat gardens that contribute to climate resilience, human connections to nature, and opportunities for ecological stewardship across Canadian municipalities. In all cases, the bylaw reforms focus on science-based, human and ecological health and safety criteria rather than subjective interpretations of aesthetics or appearance of private property yards and gardens.

For more information on these and other examples of progress on bylaws for biodiversity, please see: ecologicaldesignlab.ca. For legal commentary on bylaw reform for naturalized yards, see: lerner.ca/lernx/making-sense-of-municipal-regulation-of-naturalized-lawns/

01: City of Toronto, Ontario

Reformed Bylaw:

[Toronto Municipal Code: Chapter 489. Turfgrass And Prohibited Plants 489-1](#)

Removal of the term “weeds” (Y/N): N

Includes definition for “turfgrass” or “lawn” (Y/N): Y

TURFGRASS - “Ground cover of various perennial grasses grown for lawns, of a type that forms a dense, uniform turf if mown.”

Prohibited Plant List (Y/N): Y

Schedule A - Prohibited Local Weeds

- Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)
- Common buckthorn; Glossy buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*; *Frangula alnus*)
- Dog-strangling vine (*Cynanchum rossicum*; *Cynanchum louiseae*)
- Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)
- Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)
- Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica* var. *japonica*)
- Phragmites (*Phragmites australis* subsp. *australis*)
- Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*)
- Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)
- Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*)

02: Prince Edward County, Ontario

Reformed Bylaw:

[The Corporation of the Country of Prince Edward: By-law 78-2023 - Grass Weeds](#)

Removal of the term “weeds” (Y/N): N

Includes definition for “turfgrass” or “lawn” (Y/N): Y

TURFGRASS - “Any of the various grass species typically grown for lawns; of a type that forms a dense, even turf when mown (including but not limited to Kentucky Bluegrass, Perennial Ryegrass, Fine Fescue).”

Prohibited Plant List (Y/N): Y

Schedule A - Prohibited Local Weeds and Invasive Plants

- Glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*)
- Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)
- Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica var. japonica*)
- Phragmites (*Phragmites australis subsp. australis*)

03: City of Fredericton, New Brunswick

Reformed Bylaw:

[City of Fredericton: By-Law No. R-2 Maintenance and Occupancy Standards For Residential Properties By-Law](#)

Removal of the term “weeds” (Y/N): Y

Includes definition for “turfgrass” or “lawn” (Y/N): N

Prohibited Plant List (Y/N): N

No Prohibited Plant list provided. [Schedule A](#) mentions, “A yard shall... be maintained free of ragweed, poison ivy, poison sumac and other noxious plants.”

04: City of London, Ontario

Reformed Bylaw:

[City of London: Yard and Lot Maintenance By-law - PW-15](#)

Removal of the term “weeds” (Y/N): N - references the provisions of the Weed Control Act, but does not define the term “weeds.”

Includes definition for “turfgrass” or “lawn” (Y/N): Y

LAWN - “Perennial turfgrass grown for ground cover, of a type that forms a dense, uniform turf when mown, including but not limited to Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, or fine fescue.”

Prohibited Plant List (Y/N): Y

Schedule A - Prohibited Plants (DRAFT IN PROGRESS)

05: The Town of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia

Reformed Bylaw:

[Town of Lunenburg: Minimum Property Vegetation Standards By-Law \[DRAFT\]](#)

Removal of the term “weeds” (Y/N): N - references the provisions of the Province of Nova Scotia’s *Weed Control Regulations*, but does not define the term “weeds.”

Includes definition for “turfgrass” or “lawn” (Y/N): Y

TURF GRASS - “refers to grass species cultivated for their robustness, uniform growth, and resilience, commonly used in residential and commercial lawns. Common turf grasses include but are not limited to Kentucky Bluegrass, Bermuda Grass, Tall Fescue, St. Augustine Grass, Zoysia Grass, and Perennial Ryegrass.”

LAWN - “Perennial turfgrass grown for ground cover, of a type that forms a dense, uniform turf when mown.”

Prohibited Plant List (Y/N): Y

Planting noxious weeds and invasive species, as defined by the Province of Nova Scotia’s Weed Control Regulations, as amended from time to time, and those species identified in the “Nova Scotia Invasive Species Council’s Invasive Species in Nova Scotia Identification and Information Guide,” including plants listed in the “species to watch” section, as listed in the most current edition of the Guide is prohibited.

06: Thunder Bay, Ontario

Reformed Bylaw:

[City of Thunder Bay: BL 93 / 2022 - Clean & Clear Yards](#)

Removal of the term “weeds” (Y/N): N - references the provisions of the Weed Control Act, but does not define the term “weeds.”

Includes definition for “turfgrass” or “lawn” (Y/N): Y

TURFGRASS - “ground cover of various perennial grasses grown for lawns, of a type that forms a dense, uniform turf if mown.”

Prohibited Plant List (Y/N): Y

[Schedule A](#) - Prohibited Local Plants

- Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)
- Common buckthorn; Glossy buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*; *Frangula alnus*)
- Dog-strangling vine (*Cynanchum rossicum*; *Cynanchum louiseae*)
- Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)
- Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)
- Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandiflora*)
- Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica* var. *japonica*)
- Phragmites (*Phragmites australis* subsp. *australis*)
- Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*)
- Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)
- Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*)

Prepared for DSF and CSLA, by the Ecological Design Lab at TMU