



Summary of Ten Natural Principles to Guide your Landscape Practices

(excerpted from *Integrated Landscaping: Following Nature's Lead* by Lauren Chase Rowell, Katherine Hartnett, Mary Tebo and Marilyn Wyzga, UNH Cooperative Extension, 2007)

1. Diverse forms of life live and work together interdependently.

In natural systems plants are always found living together with animals.

2. Soils are covered and protected from the impacts of excessive wind, sun, and rain.

In natural systems, soils are typically covered and protected, with layers of vegetation serving as the first line of defense, beginning with the tallest canopy of overstory trees, followed by shrubs, herbs, and groundcovers.

3. Rainfall is filtered, conserved, and available when needed.

Natural systems allow rainwater, already reduced to fine sprays by multiple-canopy layers, to sink slowly into the ground. After being transformed into thin films of water by the litter layers, water moves through the topsoil.

4. Soil organisms are fed by the cycling and recycling of nutrients.

In natural systems, a great variety of decomposing organisms consume organic matter as a food source, leaving behind humus, the stable remnant (due to its chemical composition and chemical bonds) of decaying organic material.

5. Humus holds fertility reserves within the upper layers of soil.

In the Northeast, plant litter doesn't accumulate but decomposes quickly with the help of numerous decomposers.

6. Diversity builds over time, keeping plant pests and diseases in check.

Natural systems sustain themselves as organisms live, grow, die, and decay together.

7. Plants supply fresh air above and below the ground, as well as cool shade.

Both fresh air and cool, moist soil promote growth of root systems and populations of microorganisms.

8. The subsoil provides inorganic compounds required for living and nonliving processes.

In undisturbed natural systems, subsoil (C horizon) lies below the upper layers of soil (O, A, and B horizons). Formed by the weathering of parent material, the subsoil provides inorganic compounds (mineral matter) to the soils and plants above.

9. Natural systems are dynamic and will change over time.

Natural systems undergo succession, the progressive change from one dominant plant community to another.

10. Humans experience sensory, intellectual, emotional and spiritual stimulation, opportunities for learning, and insights into the wonder of complex natural processes.

Natural systems engage all our human senses.

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