
UNH Cooperative Extension Info Line Question of the Week

Landscaping to Save Money on Heating and Cooling

Q. We are buying a new house. Can you tell me how we can landscape to save money on heating and cooling?



A. The primary goal when using your landscape to conserve energy is to maximize shade during the summer and solar heating during the winter. In the summer, the sun rises in the northeast and sets in the northwest. In the late afternoon, the sun's rays are almost perpendicular to the west wall. The sun is at maximum heating capacity, the air is hot, and the house has lost its morning coolness. If there is space for only one tree, plant it to protect the west wall. For best results, place it up to 25 feet from the house on a line between the 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. sun positions.

In the winter, sunrise is in the southeast and sunset in the southwest. The south wall receives nearly all of the winter sun. If you plant a tree on the south wall, make sure it is a deciduous tree, which loses its leaves in the fall. The sun can shine through the leafless branches during the winter.

In New Hampshire winter winds generally come out of the northwest and northeast. An effective windbreak blocks the wind near the ground and deflects it up and over your home. This reduces air movement around your home, slowing heat loss from the walls. Windbreaks should be placed upwind about two to three times the height of the house. Although a single row of trees provides some benefit, evergreens planted in two or three staggered rows are more effective. Evergreens selected for windbreaks should be dense, relatively stiff and tend to keep their branches close to the ground.

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension Education Center's Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or e-mail us at answers@unh.edu