



# landscaping

Lacombe County's  
Guide to Landscaping

SEPTEMBER 2020



LACOMBE  
COUNTY



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## Introduction

Landscapes and landscaping features are important because they contribute significantly to our well-being and quality of life by integrating the built environment with the natural environment. Well-designed landscaping, whether it be in private yards, businesses, or new multi-lot developments, all contribute to Lacombe County's physical form and natural environment, building healthy habitat for people, plants, and animals.

## Purpose

The primary focus of this guide is to aid landowners/applicants in the design of their landscaping and preparation of Landscaping Plans to comply with the requirements of the County's *Municipal Development Plan* and *Land Use Bylaw*. Where unusual or complicated design situations arise, Lacombe County may allow adjustments as deemed reasonable and appropriate due to site circumstances.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Questions and inquiries about this document should be forward to Lacombe County Planning Services at [planning@lacombecounty.com](mailto:planning@lacombecounty.com) or 403-782-8389





## Policies

Lacombe County's *Land Use Bylaw* (LUB) outlines several landscaping requirements for developments that may have a negative visual impact, such as developments along highways or County main roads, or commercial-industrial uses.

For reference, the following sections of the *Land Use Bylaw* contain landscaping policies:

- Section 6.14 Landscaping
- Highways & County Main Roads Overlay 'OD-1' District

Site-specific guidance for commercial or industrial parks is provided in Site Development Guidelines, endorsed by Council for each commercial-industrial park.

Guidance for all multi-lot developments (residential, commercial and industrial) is also provided in the Lacombe County *Standards Manual*.

To determine if your proposed development requires landscaping as part of the consideration for development approval, please discuss with Planning Services.





## Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED, pronounced SEP-TED) sets out easy to incorporate design principles for your property, which can significantly reduce the chance of a crime occurring. CPTED principles can be applied not only to industrial, commercial, and residential multi-lot developments but also individual developments like homes, garages, and farms. Many of the principles are simple design changes such as landscaping, fencing, or lighting. CPTED principles related to landscaping include:

### 1. Natural Surveillance:

When a person feels like they are being watched or they can be seen, then they are less likely to commit a crime because there is a much greater chance that it could be witnessed or reported. A landscaping example of this would be ensuring all shrubs are a maximum height of 2 feet, and all tree canopies should be clear a minimum of 6 feet from the ground (the two feet/six feet rule).



## **2. Access Control:**

People can be deterred or directed where to enter and exit buildings, controlling access to a property, and enabling greater observation from others to possible crimes that are happening.

A landscaping example of this would be utilizing natural barriers, including prickly or hostile landscaping that is not easy to cross.

## **3. Territorial Reinforcement:**

Property is a mix of public, private, and semi-private spaces, and by creating a barrier between these spaces, it creates clearly defined property lines. This provides a cue to people on what spaces they can use and what spaces they cannot.

A landscaping example of this would be utilizing different coloured landscaping brick, informational signage, or areas of shrubbery to prevent walkthrough.

## **4. Maintenance:**

It is natural human behaviour to treat a place as it has been treated. If a place is littered with garbage, people are more likely not to use garbage receptacles. Similarly, if an area is more neglected, it tends to illicit vandalism and criminal behaviours.

A landscaping example of this would be establishing a maintenance plan and budget for the ongoing maintenance of landscaping, building, and fencing.

Numerous County staff are professionally trained as certified CPTED Practitioners to be able to assess and review design plans for future development and carry out a site assessment for homes and businesses.

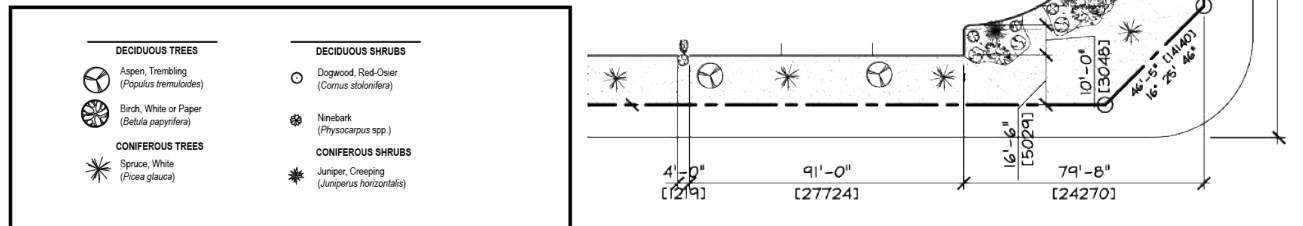
For full information on CPTED, you may be interested in reading Lacombe County's *Guide to CPTED*. To arrange for a CPTED site assessment, please contact us.

## Landscape Drawing Requirements

In keeping with Lacombe County's policies, certain new developments will be required to provide landscaping. A Landscaping Plan, as outlined in Lacombe County's *Land Use Bylaw*, must be prepared by a landscape architect or a person qualified to perform such work.

A landscape plan should show:

- ☐ Boundaries and dimensions of the subject site;
- ☐ Location and dimensions of all the buildings;
- ☐ Location of parking areas, driveways and entrances;
- ☐ Location of all exterior lights on the site and their projected light patterns in relation to adjacent public roadways and developments;
- ☐ Location of existing plant materials to be retained;
- ☐ Location of new plant materials;
- ☐ Plant material list identifying the name, quantity and size of plant material;
- ☐ All other physical features, existing or proposed, including berms, walls, fences, outdoor furniture, lighting, and decorative paving; and
- ☐ A location plan showing the proposed development and landscaping relative to the landscaping and improvements on adjacent properties.



Landscaping should be designed to reduce the visual impact of buildings, outdoor storage areas, parking areas, loading areas and garbage storage areas. Landscaping should also be used to connect proposed buildings with the roadways and assist in the direction of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

The plant material list included with the drawing shall provide the following:

Common Name	Botanical Name	Minimum Height	Caliper	Quantity
-	-	-	-	-



## Suitable Species

The plant material should be chosen carefully to respond to their proposed environment in a way that will promote the healthy growth of the species. Plant material selection should be based on site-specific considerations of soil, drainage, exposure and related conditions. A thoughtfully landscaped area with the right plant material can create an attractive landscape that is low-maintenance after the initial establishment period.

Using a variety of plants and natural elements will create a biologically diverse landscape that can help prevent disease and create a sustainable and healthy ecosystem. A diverse landscape also provides habitat, food and shelter for many birds and beneficial insects such as pollinators. Be a pollinator pal and incorporate pollinator-friendly plants and landscape features!

When selecting plants and designing your landscaping, consider the following:

- Location – does the location get full sun, partial shade, or lots of shade?
- Spacing – some plants grow high or spread out wide
- Soil conditions – what is the soil texture, pH and nutrient levels?
- Climate – how hot and dry does it get during the growing season?

All species used in landscaping plans must be native to the local area, capable of healthy growth in Lacombe County and be resilient to specific site location factors present. Native plants provide many benefits, from beauty to medicine to habitat for other species, and are usually a good choice because they are used to the local conditions and resistant to diseases and insects. Many species of trees and shrubs that occur naturally here and are adapted to this region will not need more water than nature provides once they have established an extensive root system, usually two growing seasons.

A sample list of suitable tree and shrub species commonly used for landscaping within Lacombe County is included. On the advice of a qualified landscape architect or arborist only, species may be altered to suit unique site topography, soils or micro-climatic conditions. The species selected for each development shall be to the satisfaction of the County.

## Sample List of Suitable Tree and Shrub Species

TREE SPECIES	
COMMON NAME	LATIN NAME
Alder, Green	<i>Alnus crispa</i>
Alder, River	<i>Alnus incana</i>
Aspen, Trembling	<i>Populus tremuloides</i>
Aspen, Swedish	<i>Populus tremula erecta</i>
Ash, Green	<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>
Ash, White	<i>Fraxinus americana</i>
Buckeye, Ohio	<i>Aesculus glabra</i>
Birch, River	<i>Betula nigra</i>
Birch, White or Paper	<i>Betula papyrifera</i>
Cherry, Pin	<i>Prunus pensylvanica</i>
Fir, Balsam	<i>Abies balsamea</i>
Maple, Manitoba	<i>Acer negundo</i>
Mountain Ash, Western	<i>Sorbus scopulina</i>
Oak, Bur	<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>
Pine, Jack	<i>Pinus banksiana</i>
Pine, Lodgepole	<i>Pinus contorta</i>
Poplar, Balsam	<i>Populus balsamifera</i>
Poplar, Northwest	<i>Populus x jackii 'Northwest'</i>
Saskatoon	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>
Spruce, White	<i>Picea glauca</i>
Tamarack (or Larch)	<i>Larix laricina</i>
Willow	<i>Salix</i> spp.

SHRUB SPECIES	
COMMON NAME	LATIN NAME
Barberry	<i>Berberis</i> spp.
Blueberry, Common	<i>Vaccinium myrtilloides</i>
Birch, Dwarf	<i>Betula pumila</i>
Buffalo-Berry, Canada	<i>Shepherdia canadensis</i>
Cedar	<i>Thuja</i> spp.
Cherry, Carmine Jewel	<i>Prunus x kerrasis 'Carmine Jewel'</i>
Cherry, Evans	<i>Prunus fruticose 'Evans'</i>
Cherry, Nanking	<i>Prunus tomentosa</i>
Cranberry, High Bush	<i>Viburnum trilobum</i>
Cranberry, Low Bush	<i>Viburnum edule</i>
Currant, Golden	<i>Ribes aureum</i>
Currant, Northern Black	<i>Ribes hudsonianum</i>
Currant, Wild Red	<i>Ribes triste</i>
Dogwood, Red-Osier	<i>Cornus stolonifera</i>
Elderberry, American	<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>
Fir, Dwarf Balsam	<i>Abies balsamea</i>
Gooseberry, Wild/Northern	<i>Ribes oxycanthoides</i>
Haskap (or Honeysuckle)	<i>Lonicera caerulea</i>
Hazelnut, Beaked	<i>Corylus cornuta</i>
Ninebark	<i>Physocarpus</i> spp.
Juniper, Creeping	<i>Juniperus horizontalis</i>
Juniper, Ground	<i>Juniperus communis</i>
Juniper, Upright	<i>Juniperus scopulorum</i>
Raspberry, Red	<i>Rubus idaeus</i>
Rose, Prairie	<i>Rosa arkansana</i>
Rose, Prickly Wild	<i>Rosa acicularis</i>
Rose, Virginia	<i>Rosa virginiana</i>
Spiraea	<i>Spiraea</i> spp.
Willow, Beaked	<i>Salix bebbiana</i>
Willow, Sandbar	<i>Salix exigua</i>

## Naturescaping

Naturescaping is using smart design and specific plants to reduce the environmental impact of your yard while still creating a beautiful, usable space. Naturescaping helps you create an attractive landscape that saves time, money, and water.

### Why Naturescape?

**Save water:** A naturescaped yard reduces your water bill while easing demand on water treatment and delivery systems.

**Low maintenance:** A thoughtfully naturescaped area will become very low-maintenance, usually within one or two seasons.

**Maintain biodiversity:** A naturescaped yard will invite a complex network of living things by providing valuable habitat for birds, bees, butterflies and more.

**More resilient:** A well maintained, healthy and diverse landscape is less likely to suffer from pest problems or to need pesticides or fertilizers.

**Lots of plant options:** Lots of plants are drought resistant, climate tolerant and adaptable to varying conditions in our area.





## Planting Standards

Lacombe County's *Land Use Bylaw* Section 6.14 and Highways & County Main Roads Overlay 'OD-1' District outlines landscaping regulations. Below is a short overview of those requirements.

If your site is within a commercial or industrial park, please read the endorsed Site Development Guidelines for site-specific requirements.

### Number of Trees/Shrubs

Tree or shrub counts shall be provided in required front, side or rear yards determined on the following basis:

#### Front Yard

- Trees: one (1) tree for every 3.05 m (10 ft) of linear frontage abutting the right-of-way
- Shrubs: one (1) shrub for each 1.83 m (6 ft) of linear frontage abutting the right-of-way

#### Side or Rear Yard

- Trees: one (1) tree for every 3.05 m (10 ft) of linear side or rear yard may be required
- Shrubs: one (1) shrub for each 1.83 m (6 ft) of linear side or rear yard may be required

### Tree Mix

To provide year-round colour and interest, a tree mix of approximately 50% coniferous and 50% deciduous shall be provided.

### Sizes of Trees/Shrubs

To provide variation in the size of installed landscaping:

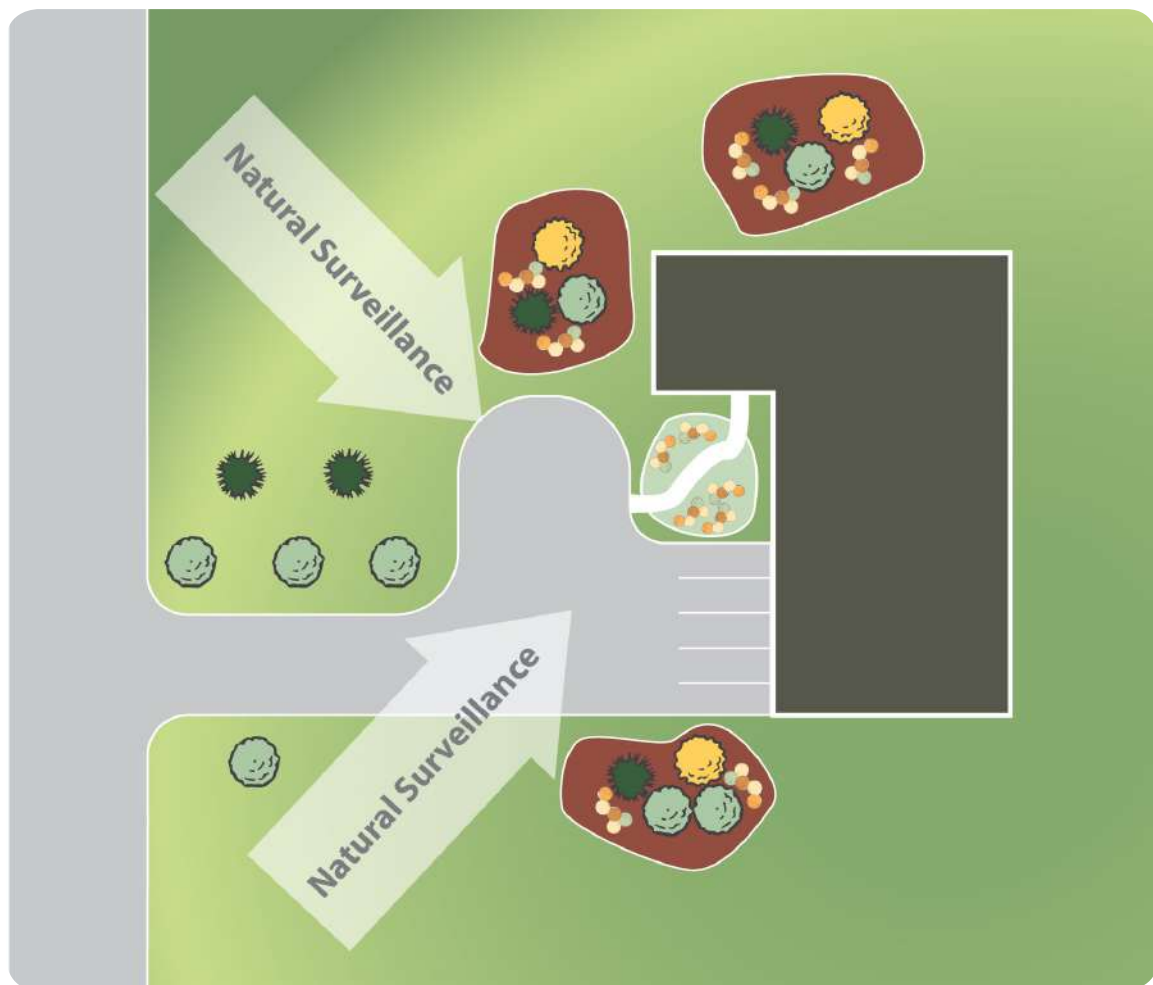
- Deciduous trees: 50% of required deciduous trees shall be at least 65 mm (2.5 in) calliper and 50% shall be a minimum of 76 mm (3 in) calliper above the root ball,
- Coniferous trees: 75% of coniferous trees shall be a minimum of 2.5 m (8.2 ft) in height and 25% shall be a minimum of 3.5 m (11.5 ft) in height above the root ball,
- Coniferous shrubs: must be a minimum spread of 450 mm (17.7 in) at the time of planting, and
- Deciduous shrubs: must be a minimum height of 450 mm (17.7 in) at the time of planting.

## Layout

Trees or shrubs should be clustered or arranged in planting beds within the site. Only where full screening is necessary should trees and shrubs be placed in a shelterbelt layout.

Each planting bed shall consist of an odd number of trees mixed 50% coniferous and 50% deciduous with shrubs.

The undeveloped portion of the site must be graded, contoured and seeded, if not utilized for other purposes.



## Setbacks

Landscaping must be designed to comply with setback requirements. Setting back your landscaping ensures proper road maintenance can occur, without any possibilities of damage to your landscaping.

It is also important to design your landscaping layout considering entrance and exit sightlines, to ensure safety for motorists and pedestrians.

### **County Road Vegetation Setback**

22.86 m (75 ft) from the centreline of the right-of-way

### **County Main Road Vegetation Setback**

30.48 m (100 ft) from the centreline of the right-of-way

### **All other County Roads**

Please contact Lacombe County, 403-782-8389

### **Provincial Highways**

Please contact Alberta Transportation, 403-340-5166

## Parking Areas

Landscape islands shall be required within at-grade parking areas with a capacity of twenty-five (25) or more vehicles, at a ratio of 2.0 m<sup>2</sup> (21 ft<sup>2</sup>) of landscaped island for every parking stall provided. Parking islands shall be placed to provide visual relief and to organize large areas of parking into smaller cells. The number of islands provided shall be to the satisfaction of the County.

Tree or shrub counts shall be provided in required parking area islands determined on the following basis:

- Trees: one (1) tree for each 15 m<sup>2</sup> (162 ft<sup>2</sup>) of required parking area islands, and
- Shrubs: one (1) shrub for each 10 m<sup>2</sup> (107 ft<sup>2</sup>) of required parking area islands.

In no case shall there be less than one (1) tree per required parking area island.



## Security

The County shall require appropriate financial securities to be posted by the landowner/applicant following the County's requirements as defined in the Development Agreement.

The value of the security is up to an amount of the estimated cost of the proposed landscaping/planting to ensure that such landscaping/ planting is carried out with reasonable diligence. The conditions of the security being that:

- (a) if the landscaping is not completed in accordance with the Land Use Bylaw and the landscaping plan within one year after occupying the building or site, then the County shall use the security to complete the approved landscape development;
- (b) if the landscaping does not survive a two-year maintenance period, the applicant must replace it with a similar type of species and with a similar calliper width or forfeit the portion of the amount fixed equal to the cost of replacing the affected landscaping materials; and
- (c) the letter of credit will be released when the landscaping and other improvements have been completed to the satisfaction of the Development Authority and the two-year maintenance period has expired.

## Planting Best Practices

### Before you Dig

Before you pick up a shovel and start digging, contact Alberta One-Call (1-800-242-3447 or [www.albertaonecall.com](http://www.albertaonecall.com)). This service prompts utility companies to mark the gas, electric, hone, and any other underground utility lines. Be careful when digging near underground electric or gas lines, and it is recommended not to plant trees or shrubs within 90 centimetres (36 inches) of them.



## **When to Plant**

Most trees and shrubs can be planted spring through fall in our region. It is recommended to avoid planting during the hottest and driest part of the summer when plants suffer effects of transplant shock and heat stress. Planting on a calm, cloudy day will be much easier on your new trees and shrubs, and also on you! It is also recommended to plant trees and shrubs early enough in the fall that it gives them enough time to establish root systems before they begin winter dormancy.

## **Preparing the Hole**

Trees and shrubs should be planted at the depth at which they were growing. The depth of the hole should be a little less than the depth of the rootball or container. Remember, plants set too deep can cause growth problems!

The hole should be 1.5x the width of the rootball, or even wider.

Remember to loosen the soil for a distance beyond the hole, and roughen up the sides of the hole, to allow new roots an easier medium to grow through and help with the water flow.

## **Basket or Container Stock**

If a wire basket or plastic pot encompasses the rootball, remove it before you plant it!

If a plant is root-bound when a container is removed (circling the inside of the container) they should be loosed or sliced. This ensures the roots grow outward into the soil and not round and round in a continuous circle. If the roots do not grow beyond the immediate hole, the tree or shrub will be much weaker and more prone to problems, such as blowing down in a strong wind.

## **Backfilling the Hole**

When backfilling, make sure you have good root-to-soil contact so the plant will be stable and establish. Backfilling in small amounts and watering it down, repeating the process, can avoid any air pockets. Mounding around the perimeter of the hole can create a treewell, helping to conserve water. Once the tree has established after a couple of seasons, the treewell will no longer be needed and should be removed.

## Staking

If you need to provide support to your trees while the roots establish, especially on a top-heavy tree over 1.5 m (5 ft) tall or where conditions are windy, install stakes. The stakes can be removed once the roots have established.

If you do not need the extra staking support, there is no need to install staking, as unstaked trees develop more roots and stronger trunks.

## Weeding/Watering

Taking care of your plants in the first year or two after planting is very important for long term growing success. Remove competing weeds, keep the plant well-watered, and avoid mechanical damage from lawnmowers or string trimmers. Once established, trees and shrubs generally require minimal care.

## Reference Material

Lacombe County *Municipal Development Plan*

Lacombe County *Land Use Bylaw*

Lacombe County Site Development Guidelines

Lacombe County *Standards Manual*

Lacombe County's *Guide to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)*

[http://www.plantnative.org/how\\_intro.htm](http://www.plantnative.org/how_intro.htm)

*Naturescape Alberta: Creating And Caring For Wildlife Habitat At Home* By Myrna Pearman & Ted Pike, ISBN 0-96857-650-8

*Tree & Shrub Gardening for Alberta* by Don Williamson, ISBN 978-1-55105-634-0