

A guide to using this template

Are you passionate about sustainable yard care practices that support pollinators, but you are a renter so you can't implement these practices yourself? Then you've come to the right place! This template was designed to help you reach out to your landlord or property management company to encourage them to implement more sustainable yard care practices. The City has a [Pollinator-Aware Yard Care program](#) that provides information and assistance to anyone who wants to implement these practices, including rental properties.

You can use the template letter/email below to express thoughts you have regarding the yard care practices being used at your rental property and provide information about sustainable alternatives. The main structure of the email is directly below. The end of the document offers additional language you may want to use, depending on your specific requests. Keep in mind that this is just a template and can be changed as you see fit to reflect and express your concerns.

Key

Yellow highlight = remove before sending

Blue highlight = customize before sending



Draft Letter/Email

Dear [landlord/property management company],

I am a resident/tenant at [address/property name], and I wanted to reach out with a request regarding the landscaping practices currently being used on the property and provide information about the City of Ann Arbor's [Pollinator-Aware Yard Care program](#), which offers information and assistance in shifting towards more sustainable and pollinator-friendly practices.

I appreciate [your/property management companies] commitment to [making this a safe and welcoming space for everyone, providing x, y, z amenities, etc.], but I have noticed that the current landscaping practices being used on the property include [mowing every x days, spraying pesticides, widespread use of turfgrass/lack of native plants, removal of leaves in the fall, etc.]. I am concerned about these practices because they are not the most sustainable options and are not supportive of crucial pollinator and native plant species.

The City's Pollinator-Aware Yard Care program provides a list of suggested sustainable lawn care practices that are supportive of pollinators and native plants. In addition, the webpage includes a list of resources that are useful in implementing these suggested practices. You can find out more about the program and see all of the resources on the program's webpage: osi.a2agov.org/pollinators. You can also find on this page a link to sign up to receive email updates, register the property as participating in the program, and request yard signs to show your participation if you use any of the recommended sustainable yard-care practices.

Implementing the sustainable landscaping practices recommended on the program webpage not only supports pollinator and native plant species but also can lead to reduced flooding, improved water quality, increased biodiversity, and healthier ecosystems. It can also have benefits for [you/property management company] by reducing time, money, and effort spent on maintenance activities.

[Optional paragraph if you would like to make specific suggestions, or you can use sample paragraphs about specific ideas or thoughts, found below] I think [x, y, z practices] would be a good fit for [address/property name] because [reasons]. This would address my concerns about [concerns].

I would be happy to discuss my request further, as well as ideas about how my concerns could be addressed by using pollinator-aware landscaping practices. I hope we can work to make [property/management company] a more sustainable space where both people and pollinators can thrive.

If you are interested in learning more or have questions about the City's Pollinator-Aware Yard Care program, please contact Sean Reynolds, Senior Analyst in the City's Office of Sustainability and Innovations, at sreynolds@a2gov.org. Using pollinator aware yard care practices is just one way to increase the sustainability of [\[property\]](#) - the City is also working on a new Green Rental Housing program. You can learn more about other sustainable practices for rental properties on the City's [Green Rental Housing webpage](#).

[\[Sign off\]](#),

[\[Name\]](#)

Specific Concerns

Concern: Mowing frequently

Solution(s): Reduce frequency and/or area of mowing

I have noticed that the current landscaping practices being used on the property include [\[mowing frequently/every x days\]](#). I am concerned about this because it can be harmful to crucial pollinator and native plant species. Reducing the frequency of mowing has been shown to support pollinator species and increase biodiversity. Increasing the height that grass is cut to can also benefit pollinators. One option could be to select certain areas of the property where the grass is kept shorter and other areas where it is allowed to grow taller. Another option is to plant [native groundcover plants](#). These species do not require as much maintenance as turfgrass and they are also beneficial for pollinators and soil quality.

Concern: Lack of Biodiversity

Solution(s): Plant native plants (specific native plant gardens and/or native groundcover)

I have noticed that the current landscaping of the property includes large areas of turf grass. I am concerned about this lack of biodiversity because it is not supportive of crucial pollinators and does not incorporate beneficial native plant species. There are several ways to incorporate native plant species into a landscape. One option is to set aside designated areas to plant pollinator gardens on the property. (If you are looking for examples, here is a [map of pollinator gardens in Ann Arbor](#).) Another option is to incorporate native plants throughout the property. One way to do this is planting [native groundcover species](#), which can be beneficial for both pollinators and soil quality. In addition to these benefits, native plants can also help to reduce flooding due to their deep

root systems. You can learn more by checking out the City's [Pollinator-Aware Yard Care](#) and [Native Plants](#) webpages where you can find helpful resources, including a list of local native plant nurseries and companies that do native plant design and plantings.

Concern: Use of Pesticides/Fertilizer

Solution(s): Use chemical-free pest management techniques

I have noticed that the current landscaping practices being used on the property include using pesticides and/or fertilizers. Chemical pesticides are poisonous substances that are harmful to plants, pets, and children and can pollute creeks, ponds, rivers, and groundwater resources. There are effective, chemical-free pest management solutions, and it would be great to see [\[property\]](#) switch to one of these options. You can learn more about alternative options on the City's [Integrated Pest Management webpage](#).

Fertilizers are concerning because overuse can lead to run-off into groundwater and surrounding waterways. Excess levels of nutrients in water can cause an overgrowth of algae, which can have negative impacts on other species. Additionally, Ann Arbor has an ordinance banning the application of fertilizers containing phosphorus. You can learn more about this ordinance and how to ensure you are using phosphorus-free fertilizer on the City's [Manufactured Fertilizer Ordinance](#) webpage.

Concern: Gas Powered Leaf Blowers & Removing the Leaves

Solution(s): Switch to electric leaf blowers, reduce frequency of use, stop using leaf blowers and leave the leaves

I have noticed that the current landscaping practices being used on the property include utilizing [leaf blowers/other means](#) to remove grass clippings and leaves. A new city ordinance prohibits the use of gas-powered leaf blowers between June 1st and September 30th (and will become a year-round prohibition starting in 2028). You can learn more about the ordinance and alternatives to gas-powered leaf blowers on the City's [Gas Leaf Blower Phase-Out](#) webpage. Gas leaf blowers not only emit harmful pollutants, greenhouse gases, and cause noise disturbances for residents, but removing grass clippings and leaves is also unnecessary and does not support pollinators. Understandably, leaves need to be removed from sidewalks for safety reasons, but leaving the leaves/clippings on grassy areas provides important habitat for pollinator species, especially over the winter. This is truly a win-win solution because not only is it an easy way to support pollinators, but it also reduces the amount of maintenance work required on the property.

Concern: Lack of Trees

Solution(s): Plant trees

I have noticed that the current landscaping of the property does not include many trees. Trees have many different benefits including improving air quality, providing shade, reducing stormwater runoff, and many more! Many tree species also play another important role of providing pollinator habitat. The City's [10,000 Trees Initiative](#) is working to plant more trees on private property. They can help provide trees for free or deeply discounted pricing, as well as help determine which tree species are best suited to a particular property and meet the goals and needs of the residents. You can visit the city's webpage (linked above) or contact Sean Reynolds (sreynolds@a2gov.org) to learn more.

Concern: Flooding

Solution(s): Add rain garden(s)

I have noticed that there is an issue with flooding on the property. I would like to suggest some sustainable solutions that can help to mitigate this problem. Rain gardens are one very effective way to manage flooding. They typically utilize native plant species, which help reduce flooding due to their deep root systems, so rain gardens also provide important habitat and food to support pollinators. There are many rain gardens around Ann Arbor, and you can check out [this map](#) if you are interested in seeing some examples. The [Washtenaw County Water Resources Rain Garden page](#) can provide additional information, including how you can get connected with a Master Rain Gardener for personalized advice. Planting [native groundcover species](#) and trees can also help to reduce flooding.