

## Lawn Gone Native FAQ

The City of Stevens Point is coordinating support for residents who want to further transform their yards into landscapes planted with native species. Thanks to strong community organizations such as [Wild Ones – Central Wisconsin Chapter](#) and the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, informal mentorship will be available to residents who want to learn the process of re-establishing a native-planted landscape and wish to receive assistance in planning and planting their yards. Participating residents must register to participate in the program and be connected with volunteer mentors. To assist with plant selection, Community Development staff partnered with the creators of [Lawn Gone Native](#) and Wild Ones – Central Wisconsin Chapter to produce [template documents](#) for specific yard conditions. These documents are intended to be guides, not rule books! Please use them as a tool and exercise creative freedom in native plant selection. Staff will review and approve plans submitted for compliance with the City of Stevens Point Code of Ordinances Chapter 21.03(21) to allow the property owner to deviate from typical turf grass-cutting standards within the City.

In the following subsections you will find our frequently most asked questions. If your inquiry is not listed, do not hesitate to reach out.

### Community Development & Inspections Department 715-346-1567 ext1

- **Participants in the Lawn Gone Native program must submit a Vegetation Management Plan.** *Vegetation Management Plan* shall mean a written approved plan specific to management of the native vegetation on a parcel which contains a map of the area upon which native vegetation or in combination with an eco-grass short no mow mix, may exceed eight (8) inches in height, a statement of intent for either an active and/or passive restoration, a plan view of the property and plantings including a general narrative description of the vegetation types, and plant succession schedule if turf grass is to remain present, with the specific timelines for management and maintenance techniques to be employed.

*Native Lawn* shall mean a parcel with a Vegetation Management Plan in place which has received approval, where native vegetation may exceed eight (8) inches in height. This shall also include undeveloped lots.

- **Participants must adhere to 21.03(21) Lawn Maintenance.** The owner of any property within the City shall maintain their lawn, grasses and weeds, to a length not to exceed eight (8) inches. If a property is found to exceed this height standard or is determined to be a public nuisance by the Code Official, a notice shall be served to the property owner giving them a minimum of 7 days from the date the notice is mailed, to correct. If the nuisance is not corrected after that time period, upon re-inspection the City shall have it abated by City or contracted staff and the

actual costs for abatement, plus any applicable municipal service fees shall be charged to the owner. Properties exempt from these requirements shall be the following:

- a. Any properties which have been deemed by the Code Official as undeveloped (the property has no dwelling on it or does not constitute a zoning lot and/or can be further subdivided) or agricultural parcels. These properties would only be required to maintain the area within the road right of way up to and including three (3) feet beyond the edge of public rights of way, in addition to any applicable vision triangle requirements per the Zoning code.
- b. If a property owner has submitted a Vegetation Management Plan and received approval from the Code Official for a Native Lawn. Those properties would be exempt from these provisions, so long as they are in compliance with the approved Vegetation Management Plan, are maintaining vegetative growth along adjoining neighboring property lines, and any applicable conditions within the approved plan.

[Noxious weeds](#) are defined by the Wisconsin State Legislature and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources: "Noxious weed" means Canada thistle, leafy spurge, field bindweed, any weed designated as a noxious weed by the [department of natural resources by rule](#), and any other weed the governing body of any municipality or the county board of any county by ordinance or resolution declares to be noxious within its respective boundaries.

- Participants in Lawn Gone Native will be eligible to receive **funding** for their projects, if/when made available, and as the City and its partners continue to pursue grants and donations. While the public may utilize our posted online resources, future funding will be specific to City of Stevens Point residents.
- Participants in Lawn Gone Native will be eligible to be partnered with a **mentor**. If you are interested, please email us at [communitydevelopment@stevenspoint.com](mailto:communitydevelopment@stevenspoint.com) to be added to a waiting list. Note that mentors are volunteers and are not directly affiliated with the City of Stevens Point.
- Participants in Lawn Gone Native will be eligible to receive In-Progress yard signage, and a finalized wood signage at the 'end' of their project.
- If you need an aerial view of your property, you may look up your residence on the [County's multiple online mapping options](#). The different maps have different layers you can turn on, such as approximate municipal boundaries/property lines, wells, wetlands, etc. The WebGIS app is the most updated map.
- Use of **compost bins** is welcome so long as they are set back 3FT from rear yard and 3FT from the side yard. If installing within the front yard, front yard setback requirements must be met for the zoning district the property is in. You may call to confirm at 715-346-1567 ext1.

Management/maintenance of compost bins are [regulated through existing ordinances](#) as they pertain to rubbish/debris, vermin, nuisance, and unsanitary conditions.

FAQ is periodically updated and grouped by department jurisdiction. We recommend searching by keyword(s).  
Reach out to the appropriate department with clarifying questions. Last Updated 9/11/2023.

- **New fencing requires permitting.** Tearing out an existing fence and reinstalling along the same boundary also requires a permit to confirm zoning standards are being met. To be walked through the fencing process, email [communitydevelopment@stevenspoint.com](mailto:communitydevelopment@stevenspoint.com), along with your site address.
- **New accessory structures require permitting** (shed, garages, pergolas/gazebos, chicken coops, etc). Apply online, in-person, or by emailing a filled application to [communitydevelopment@stevenspoint.com](mailto:communitydevelopment@stevenspoint.com).

#### **Accessory Structure Checklist**

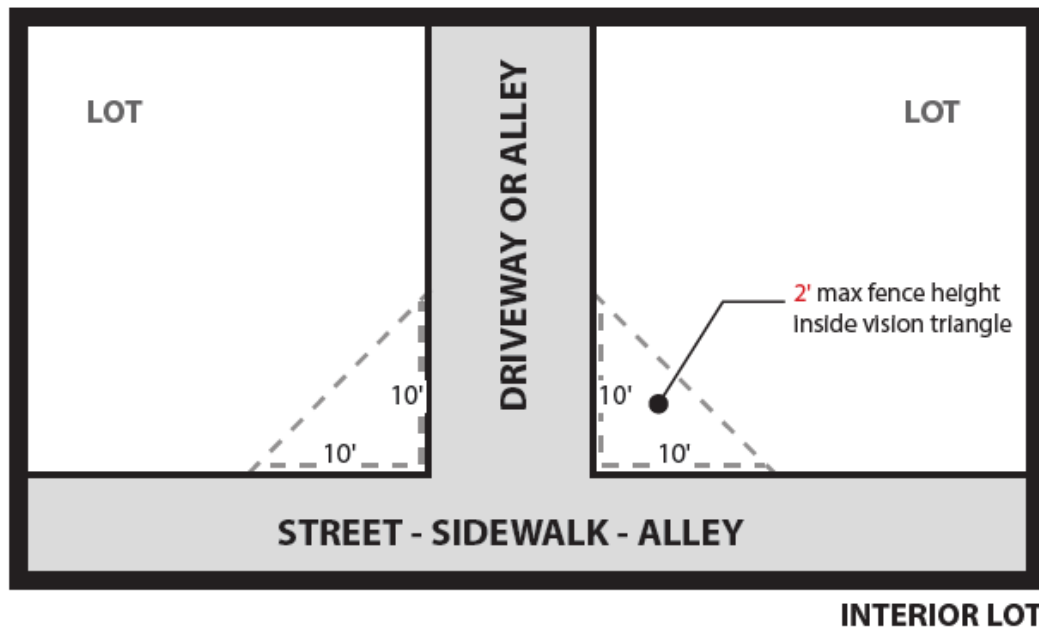
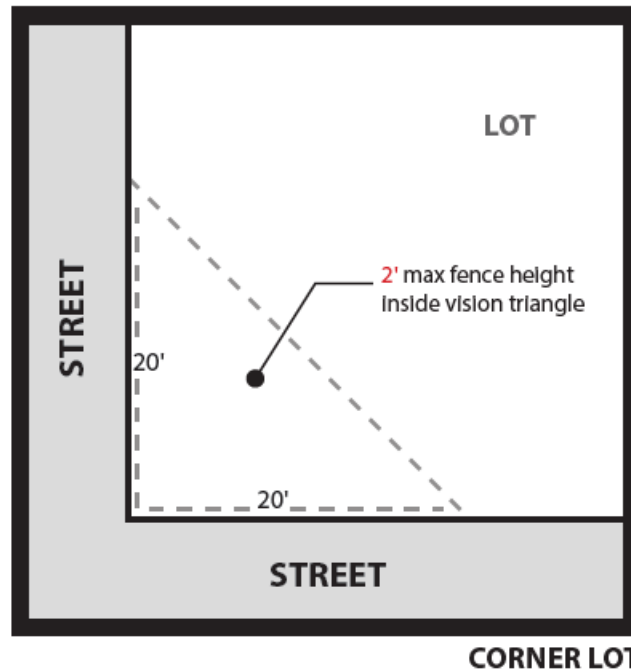
- Detached accessory structures may not exceed 900 sq.ft. combined on any lot.
- Setbacks: 3FT from the side yard, 3FT from the rear yard, 10FT\* from principal structures. \*You may install closer than 10FT to a principal structure if fire protection is installed in both the accessory structure and abutting principal structure area.
- Height: Accessory structures may not exceed 15FT in height. This is measured from grade to half-way up the truss.
- Chicken coops must meet the above setback requirements, but also may not be located closer than 25FT to any residential structure on an adjacent lot.
- Structures 25 sq.ft. and below do not require permitting, but must still meet all applicable setback, use, and size requirements/limitations.
- Garages for the purposes of parking vehicles are subject to additional standards. Contact the department to discuss your specific project at 715-346-1567 ext1.

#### **Engineering/Public Works Department 715-346-1561**

- Right-of-way and/or boulevard plantings are **permitted at your own risk** so long as they adhere to the following:
  - Boulevards are considered right-of-way, which is City property. If work needs to occur in your right-of-way, know that the area could be torn up as needed without notice. Contact the Engineering Department if you think your street may be up for reconstruction in the near future.
  - Obtain a right-of-way permit by contacting the Engineering department. There is currently no cost to obtain one.
  - Physical infrastructure is prohibited (planters, garden beds, etc).
  - Maintain sidewalk/pathways clear and accessible for pedestrians.
  - Subject to existing maintenance ordinances if violations exist (height limitations exceeded, etc.)

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- Vision Triangle standards keep pedestrians and drivers safe, and not only apply to plantings, but fencing, driveways, signage, etc. This is a 10FT x 10FT triangle that needs to be clear of vision obstructions. Fencing within vision triangle areas need to be at 2FT and under, this applies to plantings. If you require more clarification, call us at 715-346-1567 ext1 or email [communitydevelopment@stevenspoint.com](mailto:communitydevelopment@stevenspoint.com). For right-of-way specific restrictions contact the Engineering Department directly.
- Examples of Vision Triangles on a corner and interior lot:



## Forestry Department 715-346-1532

- **[Request a tree for your right-of-way/boulevard!](#)** While there is no direct charge for the planting of trees, the owner does assume responsibility of watering new trees for at least the first two growing seasons. Residents may request specific species, but know that ultimately before a tree is selected, size limitations, budgeting, plant availability, and street management issues may impact the selected tree(s).
  - Approximately 100 trees are planted in the Spring, and then again in the Fall. Spring plantings occur from the end of April to mid-May. Fall plantings occur in October.
  - If you're uncertain on how to get started, contact the Forestry Department to schedule a visit of the potential site.
- **When a tree/bush comes between neighbors!** In most cases, courts have decided in favor of a neighbor being able to remove portions of trees that may not be planted on their property but have limbs or roots that reach across property lines. Courts have determined that a landowner owns all the space above and below his property, and if something invades either of those areas, it is his right to remove it so long as they use prudent proper care. Like property line disputes, the City sees this as a civil matter. City staff cannot mediate these types of disputes or force a neighbor to cut a tree/bush. Note that there are situations where City staff can request the cutting back of foliage in the event of code compliance issues.

Homeowners also cannot simply plead ignorance to the condition of the trees on their property to escape liability in the case of tree failure. To understand a homeowner's liability in this situation, one must first understand what an "act of God" is. "An act of God" might best be described by Arboriculture and the Law as an issue that occurred as a result of "totally natural causes, which could not be prevented against by the actions of any particular individual." If the homeowner could have prevented the damage through regular checks and maintenance of the trees on his property, it could be concluded that the property owner on which the tree was situated could be held liable.

- When **pruning trees**, make sure it is your own private property! Residents may not prune trees within the right-of-way, which is City property. However, your private trees should not interfere with pedestrians within the right-of-way. Overgrown foliage that encroaches sidewalks or vision triangles may be abated by the Inspection Department or Forestry Department, with costs being assessed back to the property owner.

### Fun Forestry Tidbits

See a tree out in the boulevard and not sure what it is? The Forestry Department has inventoried over 7,000 trees throughout the City, with 170 different species represented, and mapped [here!](#)

Want to get involved and learn about plant maintenance along the way? The Forestry Department is always looking for **volunteers to assist** in maintaining prairie plantings in

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Koziczowski Park and the boulevard along Patch Street, as well as the rain garden in Mead Park.  
Email Todd Ernster (TErnster@stevenspoint.com), City Forester, for more info.

Read more about trees and our Urban Forest Management plan on the [City's Forestry page](#).

Learn more about our ordinances in the [City's Forestry Chapter](#).

### Clerks Department

- **Thinking of keeping bees?** [Apply for a bee permit!](#) Additional state requirements apply, view the application for more details.
- **Thinking of keeping chickens?** [Apply for a chicken permit!](#) Additional state requirements apply, view the application for more details.

Note that chickens must always be kept in a covered enclosure or fenced enclosure. Covered enclosures, structures with walls and a roof, require permitting from the Community Development & Inspections Department.

Roosters are prohibited within City limits.

### Transit

- We ask that residents **not** plant in right-of-way areas that are utilized for public transportation (city bus, school busses, etc) for the safety of children and other residents, and to reduce any possible vision obstruction or hazardous conditions for pedestrians as they wait and board/deboard transportation.

### Water Department

**715-345-5260 (main)**

**715-341-2012 (rain barrel/garden inspections)**

- Installing a **rain barrel** or **rain garden**? [Apply to receive credits on your water bill](#) every quarter for (1) year. This applies to residential and non-residential properties. Full details [here](#) or check out the [Stormwater FAQ](#) to learn more about our stormwater utility. You may review the residential credit fee structure on page 2 of the FAQ.

## Streets Department

- **Yard Waste Drop-off** is located one block north of the entrance to Bukolt Park in front of the City Garage at 100 Sixth Avenue.
  - Tuesdays & Thursday 1PM-7PM
  - Saturday 9AM-4PM
  - Accepted Yard materials: leaves, grass clippings, plant stalks, flowers, twigs/sticks, & brush (up to 6" diameter).
- **Throwing away invasives** into trash receptacles is currently not allowed, even if bagged, but there is potential for proper disposal.
  - Pick-up is being coordinated through the Streets Department on an individual basis. Please reach out to them to arrange during your regular pick-up, *or* if they recommend a physical drop-off. Conditions of pick-up may require that invasives are bagged and clearly marked as invasives.
- **Shredded Wood Mulch** pick-up is done from time to time at no cost to residents at the recycling drop-off area by Bukolt Park. Note that you must load it yourself and the City cannot guarantee the type of wood shredded (ex. diseased tree). Follow the City of social media to track pick-up events!

## Fire Department 715-344-1833

- **Planting around/near a Fire Hydrant is regulated!** Hydrants must have a clear space of 3FT around the perimeter of the hydrant, and a 5FT clear space in 'front' of the Fire Department connection.
- **Residents may consider burning their invasive species or yard waste/brush.** Note that the City of Stevens Point has [Burn Regulations](#) that must be adhered to. **Before you burn**, read over the Burn Regulations, review the [DNR's Fire Conditions Map](#), and obtain any necessary local permits by calling the Fire Department.
  - Note that the Fire Department does not issue permits when the Wisconsin DNR has recommended a burning ban, when wind speed is over 9MPH at Fire Station #1, and/or other dangerous conditions per the Fire Chief's discretion.
  - **Prairie and/or lawn burning** still needs to adhere to existing regulations. Current regulations as written only allow a small pile of brush or leaves to be burnt at a time. Owners will need to ensure these regulations are followed and create small piles that would then have to be burnt off one at a time. The person doing the burn would have to request a permit, with a possible site visit from the Fire Department.

*The Fire Department is in the process of updating their Burn Regulations. Check the [Fire Department's page](#) regularly to make sure you are adhering to the latest guidelines.*

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## **Police Department**

### **715-346-1500**

- While the Police Department does not have purview over Lawn Gone Native, we want to make residents aware of their **non**-emergency phone number. We understand that not all interactions with neighbors or other residents go well, especially when confrontation revolves around a property line dispute, overgrowing tree/bush, and/or spread of invasive species. We always urge residents to work through it civilly, but if you require additional assistance, please reach out to the department through their **non**-emergency line. **In the case of an emergency, dial 9-1-1.**
- Please refer to the Forestry's **When a tree/bush comes between neighbors!** Section.

## **External Resources**

[Digger's Hotline: Call before you dig!](#) Dial 8-1-1

[UW Extension – Soil Testing](#)

[UW Extension – Flora and Fauna Identification \(free\)](#)

[UW Extension – Bug Identification \(free\)](#)

[WI DNR Native Plant Resource Page](#)

[WI DNR Fire Conditions Map \(is it safe?\)](#)

[Curbside Compost Collection](#)