

## **Ecological Landscape Community Initiative**

NEWFS Final Report to the Sudbury Foundation, January 31, 2005

### **Report Outline:**

1. Summary
2. Objectives
3. Process
4. Results
5. Recommendations
6. Appendices

### **Summary**

The overall objective of NEWFS' Ecological Landscaping Community Initiative is to assist local communities toward conscious, ecologically appropriate landscape decisions. Because this is unfamiliar ground for NEWFS, the first phase has been a planning and research effort, a search for opportunities that would encourage people to see the connection between conservation issues and cultivated spaces, including opportunities that would guide the decisions of public officials and private enterprises. Many thanks to the Sudbury Foundation for their support of this planning phase.

We explored community organization, potential collaborators, avenues of communication, and opportunities to affect public policy and established practices by looking carefully at the character of two specific towns in the MetroWest area. We considered stakeholders, local issues, and collaborators in those towns, as well as NEWFS mission and resources. Research included site visits, review of town planning documents, conversations with staff from several agencies in each town, conversations with potential collaborators, and a sample attitudinal survey of the general public.

Town officials, volunteers, and potential collaborators all agreed that there is a great need for something more than the status quo. Based on collected information, the recommendation of this report is three-fold: (1) NEWFS should continue to integrate more ecological landscaping topics into its educational offerings, public information efforts, and outreach materials, as outlined in its new 2004 – 2010 Strategic Plan. (2) NEWFS should pursue one or two of the collaborative projects recommended in this report and document the process as part of a resource "toolkit". These projects should include partnering with new and existing collaborators to reach new audiences. (3) NEWFS should develop a regional resource packet (Resource Manual and Toolbox) that includes model programs, sample ordinances, and reference materials (available through the Internet as well as in printed form) that can serve a number of towns in Massachusetts and New England.

We have learned a tremendous amount from this planning grant. Some aspects of our original initiative "menu" are much more complex than initially imagined. For example, we

learned that town priorities and municipal ordinances vary greatly from town to town. Projects related to municipal ordinances will require working with a range of town officials, and educating and empowering citizen groups, which takes time and significant organizational effort. On the other hand, there is also a clear desire from these towns (and others) for collaboration in educational programs or materials, and NEWFS has tremendous strength and current capacity for these.

NEWFS is a dynamic, highly capable organization with ambitious new initiatives already in progress in conservation programs, technology and website enhancements, nursery expansion, and children's education. Factoring in a new Executive Director and other staff transitions, NEWFS should focus on a series of well-documented educational materials and programs for the first year, while we clearly define the scope of the "regional resource packet" and secure funding for a part-time project manager to develop the packet.

## **Objectives**

The *overall objective* of NEWFS' Ecological Landscaping Community Initiative is to assist local communities toward conscious, ecologically appropriate landscape decisions. By creating educational opportunities, making resources available for constituents, encouraging public dialogue, and understanding local planning and public policy processes, we want to raise landscaping issues to a more prominent place in local politics. The *objective of this specific grant* was to determine the most efficient and appropriate actions as we develop the Initiative for NEWFS.

This Initiative is based on the assumption that making ecologically appropriate landscape choices leads to the protection and conservation of native plants and natural habitats, through prudent use of water resources, fertilizers, and pesticides, as well as appropriate design and plant selection. The purpose of the Initiative is also to promote awareness of native plant conservation issues, and to empower people to make personal landscape decisions that do make a difference. These landscape topics, however, represent very broad issues connected to vast information networks, so it is important to determine which aspects are most closely connected to NEWFS mission and its 2004-2010 Strategic Plan, and how we can best serve as a catalyst for change within the context of our mission and resources.

## **Process for the Planning Phase**

Our goals are to empower local decision makers, provide resources, and facilitate collaboration with new and current NEWFS partners. We focused on:

1. Understanding town structure and resources.
2. Soliciting ideas and feedback from town residents, stakeholders, officials, NEWFS board and advisors, and looking at other communities that have similar initiatives.
3. Looking for commonalities.
4. Narrowing down a long list of possible activities and strategies to those most effective for that town.

## Understanding town structure and resources

The assumption going into the project was that most towns, at least in Massachusetts, are similar in political structure, even if the physical character differs. We looked at town planning documents like the Master Plan, Subdivision Plan, Zoning Plan, and Open Space Plan as well as talking to department representatives from Conservation/ Natural Resources, Planning, Municipal Properties, and Health Departments, and local Water Districts. We were looking for information about when landscape-related decisions were made, by whom and when. We wanted to know if there were specific guidelines or regulations written into town by-laws, and if so, what they were. Who in each town provided educational programs related to this topic, and who were/are the possible stakeholders in each town? Would a demonstration site be useful, and if so, where might it be located? An outline of questions used to research town structure (which is also the beginning of a chapter in the “Resource Manual and Toolbox”) is found in Appendix B.

## Soliciting ideas and feedback from stakeholders.

The bulk of the research involved conversations and interviews with town residents and officials, NEWFS trustees and advisors, and potential collaborative organizations. These included group meetings with NEWFS trustees, town officials, individual follow-up meetings and phone conversations with some of those officials, conversations and a limited attitudinal survey of residents, attending meetings of local garden clubs to solicit ideas, attending local committee hearings and meetings to understand more about local issues of concern, and conversations with developers, real-estate agents, and landscape architects involved with local projects. We also looked briefly at local programs in other communities.

## Looking for Commonalities

With limited funds and time, we decided to study two towns (Acton and Sudbury) in more detail, assuming they would be typical of suburban communities. At a quick glance, these towns seemed to be similar, but we were surprised to find that they had very different priorities and structures. The town departments are similar in title, but the issues and individuals that drive decisions in each town are distinct. Both are concerned with development, but in Acton, water conservation takes a higher profile because the town water supply (wells) is approaching the state maximum allowable withdrawal, especially during the summers. Thus, the Acton Water District is much more involved in landscape issues than the Sudbury Water District is in its jurisdiction. Sudbury’s priorities, on the other hand, focus more on preserving some of its historic community character and protection of natural resources and areas.

## Narrowing the Potential Project List.

Our assumption that part of the Ecological Landscape Community Initiative should include a regional resource packet of model programs was reinforced by strong feedback from the NEWFS community (trustees, volunteers, and members). Residents from many towns in the region were excited about the idea of exploring some of these ideas with their own towns. With many ideas generated at NEWFS Trustee committee meetings and a retreat, the question became how to

identify the best approaches for a given town. For towns in this study, we focused on three basic questions.

- **Which program activities or sites have highest visibility and impact?** If a demonstration site is part of the project, which public sites are visible, used frequently, and part of the community's identity? What associated educational efforts, collaborations, and interpretive materials are possible and most effective?
- **Leverage?** In addition to town agencies, which organizations or businesses are best suited for collaborations and partnerships in town?
- **Regulatory ordinances and guidelines?** There are two aspects to this question: (a) guidelines for landscape decisions and management of municipal properties and (b) guidelines or ordinances that affect development of private properties. Both provide opportunities to adjust an on-going process—the way things are done—over a longer period of time and in more than one place.

Public buildings and their landscapes are under town control, accessible to the public, and, therefore, appropriate as an educational site. Specific landscape management decisions are primarily staff-driven rather than policy-driven, so a shift toward more ecologically appropriate management practices theoretically should require fewer steps. In contrast, regulatory ordinances and guidelines vary tremendously from town to town. The possibilities range from voluntary guidelines (such as recommendations to avoid certain plants in commercial or residential development planting plans), to zoning by-laws (such as lawn area limits or required water use projection reports for proposed new developments), to procedural changes (such as a certification by a licensed landscape architect that the landscape was installed according to the approved plan, which would require by-law changes).

## **Results of Assessments for the Towns**

Detailed reports from both towns is in Appendix A. Here are the summaries:

### **Acton:**

1. Priority landscape-related issue: Water conservation, especially in residential properties.
2. Demonstration project sites: Probably the best site (easy, frequent public access with across-the-board agency and community support) is a portion of the Acton Public Library landscape (also adjacent to Town Hall and a popular children's playground). This site provides educational opportunities related to invasive plant issues, environmentally appropriate lawn maintenance, design, and water conservation issues.
3. Educational programming: Emphasis should be on working with existing agencies and organizations, and helping them reach out to new audiences. Acton Water District, Acton Stream Team, Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT), Organization for the Assabet River (OAR), Acton League of Women Voters, and the Acton Garden Club have all offered landscape-related educational programs in the past. The interest and support is certainly present, but specific programs and marketing plans need to be developed to reach new audiences.
4. Leverage: Collaboration with a few of the above-mentioned organizations is recommended, especially the Acton Garden Club, Water District, SVT, and OAR.

Several real estate offices produce packets for new homeowners and expressed interest in adding to that resource.

5. Regulatory ordinances and guidelines: The following are probably the best first steps in this arena. (1) The current Subdivision By-laws offer a partial list of recommended trees and shrubs. Dean Charter, Acton's Tree Warden and Municipal Properties Director, reviews planting plans, and is receptive to updating the list of recommended trees, and providing to all proposed developers a list of invasive species to be avoided (the list approved by the Massachusetts Invasive Plant Group would meet his criteria for impartiality). (2) Several people were also receptive to the idea of additional oversight following approval of a project's planting plan, such as requiring a landscape architect to sign off on proper installation. This might require Subdivision By-law changes and may add to the developer's cost, but provides some oversight while avoiding the addition of more responsibility onto overburdened town staff. (3) Currently, Water District staff review new subdivision plans, and require a Water Impact Report process when the development is expected to consume over 2,500 gal/day (housing developments over 10 houses usually meet this minimum.). The District requires specific water conservation practices before the water meter for each house is turned on. Compliance is excellent. The Environmental Manager for the Acton Water District suggested that reducing the threshold water consumption level required for a Water Impact Report would allow the Water District to exert more control over smaller housing developments, whose numbers are expected to increase over time.

#### **Sudbury:**

1. Priority landscape-related issue: Developing a balance between developed areas, protection of natural resources, and retaining some of the historic landscape features (such as historic town center and rural, wooded character)
2. Demonstration project sites: The Conservation Commission has been a very strong advocate for protecting Sudbury's natural resources from the impacts of development, promoting the use of native plants and use of appropriate landscape techniques. A specific demonstration site does not seem to be a high priority for this community.
3. Educational programming: Emphasis should be placed on working with existing agencies and organizations, and helping them reach out to new audiences. Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT), Earth Decade Committee, Organization for the Assabet River (OAR), and the two town Garden Clubs, as well as the Conservation Commission have offered landscape-related educational programs. Specific programs and marketing plans need to be developed to reach new audiences.
4. Leverage: Collaboration with the above-mentioned organizations is recommended, especially SVT, OAR, and the Conservation Commission. Several local garden centers such as Cavicchio Greenhouses and Russell's Nursery serve as regional resources and would also be good collaborators, as well as local real estate offices. The Thursday Garden Club seems to have a stronger horticultural community service emphasis than the Sudbury Garden Club, and would be a good partner as well.
5. Regulatory ordinances and guidelines: Sudbury's town agencies, especially the Planning Department and Conservation Commission office are fully engaged in the issues of ecological landscaping, and already have a number of progressive initiatives in place. One area still of concern to both agencies is the size of lawns in new residential

developments, but not everyone agrees about what can and should be done to change the status quo.

## **Recommendations**

This report recommends the following three-part approach.

1. **Educational efforts:** Continued expansion of ecological landscaping topics into NEWFS' educational offerings, public information efforts, and outreach materials, as outlined in its new 2004 – 2010 Strategic Plan. This includes developing more collaborations with new and existing partners to reach broader audiences and ensure continuity of program objectives.
2. Develop a “**Resource Manual and Toolbox**”, a regional resource packet that includes model programs, sample ordinances, and reference materials (available on-line as well as in printed form) that can serve a number of towns in Massachusetts and New England.
3. Assist with one or two specific **town projects** to both demonstrate and document hands-on actions that can be included in the Resource Manual and Toolbox.

### 1. Educational Efforts:

Expansion of ecological landscape topics within NEWFS existing programs is already occurring: several public outreach efforts centered on education about invasive plants are already in the works, the theme for the next NEWFS Conservation Notes magazine is about ecological landscaping, and new educational programs for landowners are under development. A concerted effort to work with a few key collaborators to more widely distribute information is now also on the agenda for the coming year.

### 2. Resource Manual and Toolbox

We had originally envisioned creating a model for New England that would move communities toward conscious, ecologically appropriate landscape decisions. What we discovered in the process of this planning grant is that towns operate in very different ways, with different resources, problems, assets, and priorities. Focusing on developing a few tools would not adequately serve the region. A skilled craftsman uses different tools to accomplish different tasks. A “cookbook” or toolbox approach would provide information about a range of formulas and community options to promote environmentally appropriate landscape choices.

This toolbox would be a regional resource, providing examples of model programs, sample ordinances, and reference materials (available on-line as well as in printed form). It would link people to other organizations that are providing services and information, as well as providing actual examples of municipal ordinances, educational brochures on a wide range of landscaping topics from appropriate lawn care and water conservation to gardening for wildlife, lists of invasive species to be avoided when landscaping municipal properties, lists of recommended species for different conditions, suggestions for collaborators and sources of programs to educate community members or developers, or even resource packets for town residents, committees, or boards. What makes this different than other internet resources is not only the ease of “one-stop shopping”, and its focus on our specific region of the country, but the

inclusion of advice about the steps a town or citizen activist might need to take to implement the programs. It is not just about the printed materials, but also about who to contact, and how to proceed.

NEWFS' strengths are centered on appreciation of and support for conservation of native plants and their habitats. Working to limit and controlling invasive non-native species is one of our strengths, so we would continue to serve as the central regional resource for information about that particular program area. In order to include topics like water conservation, pesticide awareness, lawn care, ordinance and by-law models, and others, this Resource Manual and Toolbox would need to be the product of a collaboration with other organizations who have more expertise and experience in these topics.

Development of this resource would probably require additional funding, since NEWFS' current staff is operating at full capacity. The contracted or part-time staff person would need to work with collaborators, clearly identify all the possible "chapters", assemble sample materials or create new resource materials, work with legal advisors or planning professionals to develop model ordinance examples, and collaborate with NEWFS staff and website experts to create the on-line components of the Resource Manual and Toolbox, among other things.

#### Town Projects:

One way to maintain forward momentum for the Toolbox while NEWFS and its partners obtain funding support is to continue working with the two towns that participated in the planning grant. Careful selection and documentation of one or two projects will serve several purposes. (1) Carefully developed educational materials and programs, developed in conjunction with collaborators such as SVT, OARS, local garden clubs or nurseries, will benefit both towns as well as other towns in the region. (2) Documentation of the process and results will begin building the resource materials for the Toolbox. (3) The process of community education and empowerment will continue by working with the agencies and organizations that we have already contacted.

NEWFS should start by initiating conversations with the above identified collaborators in Acton and Sudbury, identifying key volunteers and staff who can help develop one or two co-sponsored educational programs or materials and a targeted marketing plan to reach out to new audiences.

#### **Conclusion:**

We sincerely appreciate the support of the Sudbury Foundation for the planning phase of NEWFS' Ecological Landscaping Community Initiative. NEWFS is committed to this initiative as part of its Strategic Long-Range Plan, and this grant allowed us to learn about the possible roles NEWFS and its collaborators can play in assisting local communities toward conscious, ecologically appropriate landscape decisions.

**Budget Report**

Grant Expenses:

Coordination (Cheryl Lowe, Horticulture Director)	\$13,800
Survey coordination and analysis (Debra Strick, Marketing Director)	\$ 900
Travel, communications, and meetings	\$ 300
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Total:	\$15,000

## **Appendix A: More Detailed Assessments for Sudbury and Acton**

### **Attitudinal Survey Results:**

The purpose of the small public survey was to get a baseline for the general public's understanding of and attitudes about two aspects of ecological landscaping—fertilizing and watering lawns, and the issue of non-native invasive species. It was conducted at a local grocery store at two different times. The small sample size (100 people) does not allow us to draw extensive conclusions, but does give us a rough baseline.

Almost 75% of participants considered themselves an environmentalist (at least 3 or 4 on a scale of 5) and 68% maintained a garden or yard. As expected, there was a wide range of responses to the fertilizer questions. One-third of those surveyed seldom fertilized their lawn (not at all or only once a year), and of those who fertilized, roughly half used a fertilizer with an herbicide in it (“Weed-and-feed”). It was interesting to see that 12% did not water their yards at all, 39% hand-watered, 11% used an automatic irrigation system, and 17% manually set up sprinklers. The survey also gave us a general indication of how much the general public understands about invasive species. Forty-two percent knew what an invasive plant was, and purple loosestrife was by far the most commonly cited example.

### **Acton Town Assessment:**

#### **Priority landscape-related issue:**

Water use and conservation, especially in residential properties, is one of the key issues for Acton. In a meeting with town representatives from Planning, the Health Dept., Natural Resources, Municipal Properties, and the Water District, the following advice was offered:

- Focus on limiting external water use.
- Focus on Acton's residential audience, since that would make largest impact. Target newer residential developments.
- Work with land developers early in the project so that they understand implications of landscape decisions.
- Discourage planting of invasive species in new landscape plantings.

#### **Demonstration project sites:**

Probably the best site (easy, frequent public access with across the board agency and community support) is a portion of the Acton Public Library landscape (also adjacent to Town Hall and a popular children's playground). Other possible sites include areas within NARA (North Acton Recreation Area, with lots of area, but less public traffic), East Acton Village (only in early stages of planning and development, so several years off), Acton Arboretum, and the outdoor classroom by the new elementary school (public access is limited). The landscapes of the new Public Safety Building and new high school also do not have high general public accessibility.

The library site provides educational opportunities related to invasive plant issues, environmentally appropriate lawn maintenance, design, and water conservation issues. Management of the site is already a joint effort between the Municipal Properties staff and the

Acton Garden Club, and both are interested in enhancements. It might include replanting a small area near the new entrance to the library (removing invasive species, and adding more drought-tolerant plantings) and/or developing a new area just beyond the entrance where the staff struggle to maintain turf. It could also include:

- Interpretive signs.
- Educational programs at library on the design process and new installations.
- Involve Public Works staff in the planning process, so they understand issues.
- Articles in newspaper.
- Brochure at the library describing the project and its rationale, as well as a general resource brochure on species to avoid and suggested substitutes.

#### Educational programming:

Emphasis should be placed on working with existing agencies and organizations, and helping them reach out to new audiences. Acton Water District has an extensive set of programs and resources related to water conservation. Several conservation groups like the Acton Stream Team have developed programs to educate residents about practices related to maintaining water quality in Acton's waterways, in partnership with other conservation groups like the Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) and the Organization for the Assabet River (OAR). Acton League of Women Voters produced a pesticide and organic lawn maintenance brochure available in Town Hall. The Acton Garden Club has been an active partner with the Water District in promoting water-wise gardening projects and the elementary school outdoor classroom. The challenge is reaching audiences that are not already connected to the conservation community. The interest and support is certainly present, but specific programs and marketing need to be developed.

#### Leverage:

Collaboration with a few of the above-mentioned organizations is recommended, especially the Acton Garden Club, Water District, SVT, and OAR. We recommend inviting a few regional garden centers to participate in any educational efforts, but the local opinion indicates Acton-based garden centers are less likely to be interested, at least at the beginning. Several real estate offices produce packets for new homeowners and expressed interest in adding to that resource.

#### Regulatory ordinances and guidelines:

Based on a number of conversations with town officials, the following are probably the best first steps in this arena.

1. The current Subdivision By-laws offer a partial list of recommended trees and shrubs. Dean Charter, Acton's Tree Warden and Municipal Properties Director, reviews planting plans with an eye substitutions when a few particular problem species are proposed for street trees in new subdivisions. Mr. Charter is receptive to updating the list of recommended trees, and providing to all proposed developers an unbiased list of invasive species to be avoided (such as those that have been approved by the Massachusetts Invasive Plant Group, a collaborative comprised of the nursery industry, conservation groups, state agencies, and academics, working together using established scientific criteria, to determine which plants are invasive on the Massachusetts landscape.)
2. One of the issues related to landscapes in new residential developments is the lack of oversight once the planting plan has been approved. This provides opportunities for

contractors to make last minute changes, the most common being plant substitutions, inadequate soil preparation, and poor installations. One suggestion is to require the landscape architect who developed the planting plan to sign off on the installation, which encourages more supervision and accountability between what was approved by the planning department and what was installed. This might require subdivision by-law changes. This suggestion may add to the developer's cost, but provides some oversight while avoiding adding more responsibility onto overburdened town staff. Some of the developers with new projects in the proposal stage in Acton might be receptive to testing this out as part of the conditions of project approval.

3. Currently, Water District staff review new subdivision plans, and require a Water Impact Report process when the development is expected to consume over 2,500 gal/day (housing developments over 10 houses usually meet this minimum.). The District requires specific water conservation practices before the water meter for each house is turned on. Compliance is excellent. The Environmental Manager for the Acton Water District suggested that reducing the threshold water consumption level required for a Water Impact Report would allow the Water District to exert more control over smaller housing developments, whose numbers are expected to increase over time. Several larger housing developments are already in the early stages of development, but there are few large areas left in town.

### **Sudbury Town Assessment:**

#### Priority landscape-related issue:

Sudbury's priorities in this arena seem to be in developing a balance between developed areas, protection of natural resources, and retaining some of the historic landscape features (such as historic town center and rural, wooded character). The Conservation Commission's priorities are permanent protection of key undisturbed parcels that contribute to the biodiversity of the town; restoration/revegetation of existing disturbances to reconstruct key migration corridors and wildlife habitat; and improving existing drainage structures to protect their water supply. The Planning Department's priorities focus on water resource and scenic road bylaws, affordable housing, and the historic town center.

#### Demonstration project sites:

The Conservation Commission has been a very strong advocate for protecting Sudbury's natural resources from the impacts of development, promoting the use of native plants and appropriate landscape techniques. They are currently working with the Chiswick Park developer on a demonstration native plant garden and pond just off Rte 20. A specific demonstration site does not seem to be a high priority for this community, as the public, high-pedestrian areas (library, Fairbank Community Center, and athletic fields) are not well-suited to a demonstration garden.

#### Educational programming:

Emphasis should be placed on working with existing agencies and organizations, and helping them reach out to new audiences. Sudbury Valley Trustees, Earth Decade Committee, Organization for the Assabet River (OAR), and the two town Garden Clubs, as well as the Conservation Commission have offered landscape-related educational programs. Of the two

garden clubs, the Thursday Garden Club seems to be more involved in civic landscaping projects than the Sudbury Garden Club, maintaining roadside plantings, and the Hosmer House gardens and the small park across from it in historic Sudbury Center. They also maintain the children's garden and wildlife garden (bird feeders) adjacent to the Sudbury library and offer a children's educational program monthly at the library that focuses on environment, nature and horticulture. Specific programs and marketing plans need to be developed to reach new audiences. Presentations (which require people to take time off from a busy schedule) offered by the Conservation Commission have not been well attended, and town officials suggested that information sent by mail might be more effective.

Leverage:

Collaboration with the above-mentioned organizations is recommended, especially SVT, OAR, and the Conservation Commission. Although the Sudbury Water District has not taken the lead, they might be another potential partner. Several local garden centers such as Cavicchio Greenhouses and Russell's Nursery serve as regional resources and have been cooperative in the past, so they would also be good collaborators. Some of the local real estate offices may also be good partners.

Regulatory ordinances and guidelines:

Sudbury's town agencies are fully engaged in the issues of ecological landscaping. The Planning Department and Conservation Commission Offices take the lead in this town, and already have a number of progressive initiatives in place. The Town also has a Permanent Landscape Committee that provides advice when requested as well as a Design Review Committee that focuses on commercial properties and sign issues. The Conservation Commission maintains an approved list of locally native plants appropriate for use in both municipal and private landscape projects, and encourages use of these plants, but does make some exceptions. This is a pro-active model, and some people have complained that the choice of plant species is sometimes too limiting. One area still of concern to both planning and conservation departments, as well as some residents to whom I spoke, is the size of lawns in new residential developments. The concern with lawn size is compounded by the fact that many of these turf areas are managed by commercial landscape service providers, who tend to use pesticides and fertilizers on a regular basis. Not everyone agrees, however, about what can and should be done to change the status quo.

## **Appendix B. Assessment Process.**

### *Getting to Know the Communities*

1. Visit each town, noting town centers, prominent natural areas, parks and recreational areas, business zones, new developments, etc.
2. Look at town planning documents such as the town's Master Plan, Zoning By-laws, Open Space Plan and other documents.
3. Meet with key officials to develop an understanding of each department's priorities with respect to landscape and gain a feel for the overall town sense of place. Who reviews site plans for new commercial and residential developments? What are the town's current and future priorities in planning and development? Where do they see a need for improvements in policy or by-laws?
4. Look at how public properties are landscaped and maintained. Who makes landscape decisions for public spaces?
5. Who are the other stakeholders and collaborators? Which organizations or business leaders might want to get involved with this issue?
6. What landscape-related educational opportunities already exist? What are some of the possible avenues for expanding this outreach?
7. What approaches will be most successful in bringing landscape issues to a more prominent place in this community?
8. What are the best channels of communication?
9. What projects or activities might lead to changes in current landscape practices?
10. What tools, resources, products and materials would be needed?
11. What products and materials are already available with little or no modification, and which ones need to be developed?

### *Narrowing the Potential Project List*

Using the two towns in the study, we used the process of narrowing down the list of possible activities in a specific community both as a way to understand the process and a means to create an important set of questions for someone interested in duplicating this process in their town. We considered three categories that would make the most impact, with the assumption that projects that simultaneously served more than one of these categories would be a good place to start.

1. Which program activities or sites have highest visibility? Which public sites are visible, well-used, and part of the community's identity? (i.e. town center, historic district, recreation center, or library.) If the project involves installing a new demonstration landscape, who will be responsible for maintaining the areas once the installation is completed? What educational efforts, collaborations, and interpretive materials could be associated with a project at that site? If the project does not include a demonstration garden, what audiences and topics are highest priority for the town?
2. Leverage: In addition to town agencies, which organizations or businesses are best suited for collaborations and partnerships in town? Consider conservation organizations (local

land trusts, natural area conservation associations, watershed associations, etc.), businesses, and civic groups (garden centers, the local business association or service club (i.e. Rotary Club), real estate agents with packets for new homeowners.) Consider the visibility of the partnership and possible funding. Again, what are the educational possibilities, and who might contribute what aspects?

3. Regulatory ordinances and guidelines. This topic separates into two basic areas: (a) guidelines for landscape decisions and management of municipal properties and (b) guidelines or ordinances that affect development of private properties. Both areas are opportunities to adjust an on-going process—the way things are done—over a longer period of time and in more than one place. They may also take longer and require a greater understanding of the political process in each town.

Within the municipal properties arena, consider that public buildings and their landscapes are under town control, accessible and therefore appropriate as an educational site, and are not driven primarily by making a profit (although efficiency with limited staff is often of primary importance). Landscape management decisions are primarily staff-based rather than driven by specific regulatory guidelines, so change may be easier if changes support overall goals of the agency. Which agencies in town manage town properties, and what are the opportunities for education or change in practices?

The second arena (regulatory ordinance and guidelines) varies tremendously from town to town. Which landscape-related ordinances are currently in place, which ones might be amended or supplemented, and by whom? Consider the range of possibilities from voluntary guidelines (such as recommendations to avoid certain plants in commercial or residential development planting plans), to zoning by-laws (such as lawn area limits or required water use projection reports for proposed new developments), to procedural changes (such as a certification by a licensed Landscape architect that the landscape was installed according to the approved plantation by-law changes). Conversations with department staff that review proposed developments are very useful for identifying the most viable proposals.