



MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 9, 2018
TO: Chairperson Carter, Members of the Planning Commission, and Administrator Meyer
FROM: Cynthia Smith Strack, Community Development Director
RE: Native Plantings/Landscapes

REQUEST: Discussion.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Over the past few meetings the Commission has been discussing native/natural landscapes, especially as they pertain to the nuisance code and perhaps encouraging plantings. As discussed, native/natural landscapes have many potential benefits including: stormwater filtration and discharge slowing, creation of habitat supportive of pollinators, creating corridors for movement/living of wildlife, natural cooling, and positive aesthetics.

Commissioners indicated an interest in allowing limited natural/native landscapes under code with Bloomington's code language as a touchstone. Attached please find sample language drafted for the proposed nuisance code update.

Staff is Commission comment and input.

REQUEST

For discussion.

G. Any grass or weeds, whether noxious as defined by law or not, growing upon any lot or parcel of land in the City of Belle Plaine to a height greater than eight (8) inches, except as defined below. This condition may be subject to immediate abatement as defined in this Section.

1. Non-noxious weeds and grass in wetland areas, including wetland buffers.
2. Non-noxious weeds, grasses, and herbaceous vegetation that are within fifty (50) feet of designated stormwater ponds (or their required buffers whichever are greater), natural or altered creeks, rivers, streams, bluffs, and ravines.
3. Agricultural fields and crops that are planted, maintained, and harvested according to normal farming practices.
4. Temporary erosion control grasses.
5. Native prairie and/or natural landscapes are subject to the following limitations:
 - A. Native prairie and/or natural landscapes are planned, intentional, maintained, and designated areas where native plants are being or have been planted.
 - B. Native plants are grasses, wildflowers, forbs, ferns, and shrubs that are plant species native to or naturalized to the state of Minnesota, excluding prohibited exotic species, as defined by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 84D. Native plants do not include weeds.
 - C. Native prairie and/or natural landscapes include areas illustrated on official landscape plans which are required under the development review process, as approved by the City.
 - D. Native prairie and natural areas within a distinct, defined landscape area on a single or two-family residential parcel are allowed subject to a landscape plan being drafted, submitted, and approved administratively by the City. Said landscape plan shall at a minimum illustrate areas proposed for native plantings and/or natural landscapes, species proposed for planting, proposed maintenance of the area, and proposed planting border/edging. When drafting landscape plans, applicants are encouraged to consult with resource providers, including but not limited to, Scott County Soil and Water Conservation District Representatives and persons with specific, demonstrated knowledge of native plantings and natural landscapes. Said landscape plans are subject to the following limitations:
 1. The native plantings and/or natural landscaped areas must be located on private property.
 2. Native planting and/or natural landscaped areas shall occupy no more than fifty percent of the pervious surface area of the parcel excluding natural wooded areas, bluffs, wetlands, water bodies, ravines, and rain gardens.
 3. Native planting and/or natural landscaped areas shall be set back from property lines by at least five feet. The setback is not required where:

- a. The defined landscape area abuts a similar private or public landscape area,
 - b. The defined landscape area abuts a wetland, pond, bluff, ravine, or waterway,
 - c. A fully opaque fence at least four feet in height is installed along the lot line adjoining the planned landscape area.
4. Native planting and/or natural landscapes must be maintained so as to not include unintended vegetation.
5. Native planting and/or natural landscapes, after being established, must be maintained at least once per year through mowing or, if appropriate permits are obtained, burning.
6. Native planting and/or natural landscapes shall not include turf-grass lawns left unattended for the purpose of returning to a natural state.