

# My Yard – February

## If everyone did one thing...

Nebraska Statewide Arboretum,  
[plantnebraska.org](http://plantnebraska.org)



Even if you feel like your environmental efforts are just a drop in the bucket, keep it up. Few of us are in a position to dramatically transform the transportation, energy and industrial sectors in our communities, but our personal actions often influence others to do the same, and may have far more impact than we realize:

With more than 40 million acres of turfgrass in the U.S., if every property owner converted 10-25 percent of their turf, it would add 4-10 million acres of potentially lower maintenance plantings, wildlife habitat and/or productive gardens with all their associated benefits.

- Simply mowing our lawns uses over 800 million gallons of fuel per year. If every property manager reduced power mowing by a fourth (through turf area reduction, fertilizing less, using human-powered mowers, etc.) it would save more than 200 million gallons of fuel every year, and reduce mower-generated air and noise pollution by a fourth.
- Thirty to 50 percent of the water we use in landscapes is wasted by over-watering, inefficient design, broken sprinkler heads, watering pavement, etc. Besides the waste of water, it also costs money and fuel for extraction, pumping and treating, and the runoff can carry sediment and pollutants. During the growing season, several billion gallons could be saved every day if landscapes were watered more efficiently using drought-tolerant plants and other measures.
- Plant a tree. A single tree can absorb one ton of carbon dioxide over its lifetime and a well-placed one can reduce heating and cooling 10-30 percent.
- Use recyclable bags. Currently most plastic bags can't be recycled because they can bind up recycle equipment.
- Eat less meat, buy locally when possible and compost yard and kitchen waste to limit waste and transportation costs and improve your soil.
- Take food, water and coffee containers to restaurants to reduce the use of styrofoam or other unrecyclables.
- If everyone recycled one aluminum can, 295 million new aluminum cans could be made.
- Use heating and air conditioning as needed in cars and homes but extend your "comfort zone" with appropriate clothing.
- Bike, carpool or use public transportation rather than hopping in the car.
- Replace inefficient windows as they age to reduce energy loss as much as 70 percent, and employ other home insulation and weatherizing methods.