



## Maryland Green Registry MEMBER

The Maryland Green Registry promotes and recognizes sustainable practices at organizations of all types and sizes. Members agree to share at least five environmental practices and one measurable result while striving to continually improve their environmental performance.

# Dancing Grass Designs, LLC

14425 Sugarland Lane  
Poolesville, MD 20837  
(301) 349-4489  
Sustainable landscape design firm  
Member since July 2009

## Management and Leadership

### Environmental Policy Statement

*The policy of Dancing Grass Designs, LLC shall be to develop sustainable landscapes for its clients and institute sustainable work habits in its business operations.*

*Sustainable landscape design plans minimize site disturbance, minimize impervious surfaces, use native plants, remove and destroy invasive plants, collect and use rainwater, and reduce the need for supplemental watering. Employees and subcontractors of Dancing Grass Designs shall adhere to the sustainable practices outlined in the company brochure. The policy shall be implemented under the direction of the Principal of Dancing Grass Designs.*

*Evaluation of the policy will be conducted through the following:*

- *Develop methods in conjunction with contractors that limit removal of soils, compaction of soils, and damage to trees.*
- *Use predominately native plants in clients' landscape plans.*
- *Use pervious pavers, sand-set pavement, or devise other methods to ensure that no additional water is running off-site following construction of hardscape areas.*
- *Promote the use of cisterns to clients.*
- *Identify invasive species present on clients' properties and strongly recommend removal and management of such plants.*

*Sustainable work habits will include the following:*

- *Recycle print cartridges and paper waste.*
- *Use recycled printer paper.*
- *Limit the printing of Internet searches and other information if it can be saved on a hard drive or disk.*
- *Turn off lights in the evening and during business hours when a room is unoccupied. Switch to LEDs or CFLs where possible.*



## **Annual Environmental Goals**

*We practice sustainability in our day-to-day operations and by the very nature of our business—sustainable landscape design. Following is a list of our annual goals.*

1. *Utilize very thick mulch or other appropriate materials or products to reduce compaction of soils during construction and plant installation phases. (Goal achieved: We use several inches of shredded hardwood mulch in our clients' installations, along with several inches of compost to reduce stormwater run-off and improve native soils.)*
2. *Protect trees during construction by using fencing placed around the critical root zone of potentially impacted trees.*
3. *Calculate the percentage of native plants based upon the total of all plants specified in clients' plant lists. The goal will be to achieve 70% native plants for each client. (Goal achieved: During the period 2010-2014, 71% of the plants installed in our clients' gardens were species native to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.)*
4. *Calculate the percentage of pervious paving used for each client's plan. The goal will be to achieve 50% pervious paving of annually installed hardscape areas.*
5. *Be successful in getting at least one client each year to utilize cisterns for watering landscape plants.*
6. *Distribute a list of commonly accepted invasive species to each client and explain the merits of removal and the hazards of not removing the offending plant(s). (Goal achieved: Each client receives a copy of the research we compiled on plant species invasive to Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, and Pennsylvania.)*
7. *The Principal of Dancing Grass Designs will plant 5 native trees on her Montgomery County property each year. (Goal achieved: Since 2010, 38 natives trees have been planted on the Principal's property including Northern Red Oak, Sweetbay Magnolia, White Pine, and Blackgum.)*
8. *Use only recycled or FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) paper for printing stationary, brochures, and other marketing materials.*

**Environmentally Preferable Products and Services**

*The very nature of the business at Dancing Grass Design is to reduce negative environmental impacts and improve wildlife habitat by adhering to our tenets of sustainable design. Additionally, our clients are encouraged to use non-chemical alternatives for plant and lawn care (i.e. corn gluten instead of Preen to control weeds) and to dramatically reduce the use of nitrogen in the spring (e.g. Weed-and-Feed products) to protect the Chesapeake Bay from algal blooms.*

**Environmentally Preferable Purchasing**

*We purchase office equipment, fixtures and supplies that are energy efficient, recyclable and/or FSC certified. For example, our new EPEAT computers are Gold certified.*

**Environmental Restoration or Community Environmental Projects**

*In 2010, we planted 18 native trees to restore wildlife corridors between man-made breaks in forest islands. These corridors allow the dispersal of species from one forest patch to another by providing “highways” for species to travel without having to leave their preferred habitat type.*

*In 2012, we completed a pro bono design of a sustainable community garden for the town of Poolesville and surrounding communities. The garden was installed during Fall 2013 and Spring 2014. The design includes native ornamental planting beds, a cedar fence, 24 raised planters, seating for gardeners, and an amenity for the downtown area of Poolesville. Students earn SSL (student service learning) hours by donating their time to the installation and maintenance of the garden.*

## Waste

**Solid Waste Reduction and Reuse**

*To reduce unwanted mail, we subscribe to Catalog Choice—an online service that allows businesses and homeowners to opt out of receiving postal mail and solicitations.*

**Recycling**

*The following is a list of the materials recycled by Dancing Grass Designs:*

*Printer and copier paper;  
Junk mail and other unwanted mail;  
Paper, cardboard, and plastic packaging for kitchen and office supplies;  
Glass and aluminum drink and food containers;  
Plastic planting pots and trays;  
Printer ink cartridges.*

## **Energy**

### **Energy Efficiency**

*Deciduous trees have been planted on the south and west sides of our office to reduce summer solar heat load. Likewise, UV window film has been applied to south- and west-facing windows and doors to block heat. A windscreen containing evergreen trees was planted on the north/northwest side of the office in 2012 to reduce the effect of cold winter winds. With these changes our kWh usage decreased 15% from 2007 to 2009. Propane usage decreased 20% from 2007 to 2008 by disconnecting an unnecessary second water heater.*

### **Renewable Energy**

*Plans are underway to install roof-mount photovoltaic panels in 2015.*

## **Transportation**

### **Employee Commute**

*The Principal of the company works in her at-home office thereby eliminating commuting trips to an outside office.*

## **Water**

### **Stormwater Management and Site Design**

*We use numerous techniques to reduce stormwater runoff including but not limited to: vegetated swales, conservation landscaping, and sheet flow to conservation areas. We have also developed new low-cost techniques to allow stormwater to infiltrate planting beds without causing erosion of those beds.*

*Plants such as Bald Cypress, Pond Cypress, Northern Red Oak, Sweetbay Magnolia, Japanese Cedar, Southern Arrowwood, Virginia Sweetspire, and Inkberry Holly have been planted to reduce stormwater run-off at our facility. Additionally, much of the site is maintained as an attractive drought-tolerant*

*meadow, thereby reducing stormwater runoff and the need for fertilization and mowing.*

## **Other**

- In 2012, the owner of Dancing Grass Designs served as LEED Project Administrator and Landscape Designer in the major renovation of a South Carolina beach cottage and garden that was awarded LEED for Homes Gold certification. LEED for Homes is a third-party certification system for building and designing high-performance green homes that are energy-and-resource-efficient and healthy for its occupants.*

*In 2014, we received certification as a Montgomery County Green Business. This rigorous program recognizes businesses that have taken voluntary steps to protect, preserve, and improve the environment.*

*The Principal of Dancing Grass Designs, Denise Graybill-Donohoe, is a LEED AP BD+C certified by the U.S. Green Building Council and the Green Building Certification Institute. She holds a Master's degree in sustainable landscape design and is a member of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Maryland Native Plant Society, and Association of Professional Landscape Designers. Dancing Grass Designs is a member of the Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council and the U.S. Green Building Council.*

**Profile Updated February 2015**



*Help build a greener, more sustainable Maryland through voluntary practices that reduce environmental impacts and save money.*

*Learn more at [www.green.maryland.gov/registry](http://www.green.maryland.gov/registry)*

