

Landscape Management

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Landscape modifications can create an environment unattractive to primary tick hosts (e.g. deer and rodents) and may decrease the number of ticks that are present in parts of the yard. Further these landscape modifications can also create drier habitats that are less favorable for tick survival.

Although landscape work can be expensive, and not acceptable to some residents, there are relatively cheap and simple options that can be employed. Key among these is to keep lawns and yards well maintained to prevent ticks from living near your residence. Additional options to reduce tick habitats include:

- Keep grass short by frequent mowing
- Remove leaf litter, brush and weeds at the edge of the lawn and around stonewalls and woodpiles
- Restrict the use of groundcover plants such as ferns and junipers (both low growing & spreading plants) in areas used most often
- Plants can be pruned to provide open space between the ground and base of the plant
- Clean up and seal stonewalls and small openings around the home to discourage rodent activity
- Trim tree branches and shrubs around the lawn edge to let in more sunlight
- Use plantings that do not attract deer
- Consider fencing to exclude deer
- Try to avoid placing firewood piles and bird feeders next to the residence
- Move children's swing sets and sand boxes away from the woodland edge and place them on a woodchip or mulch foundation
- Adopt hard landscape practices (for example: use of decking, stones, rocks, patios, gravel, etc.) and the use of drier or less water demanding plants
- Create woodchip, mulch, or gravel borders at least 3 feet wide between lawn and woods or stonewalls

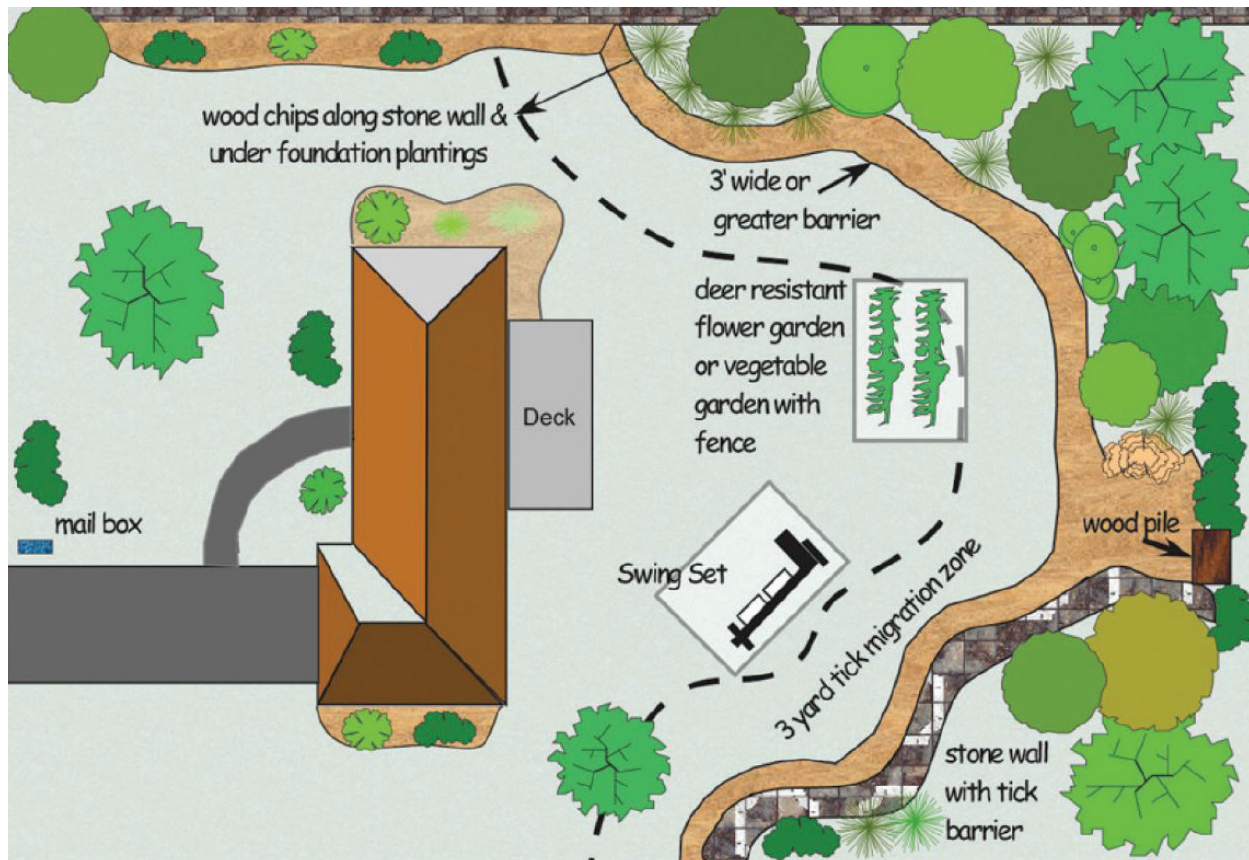


Image Source: Stafford, KC. Tick management handbook; an integrated guide for homeowners, pest control operators, and public health officials for the prevention of tick-associated disease.

Note that while landscape management practices can minimize the numbers of primary hosts and ticks, it alone will not reduce the likelihood of tick bites to zero, as the transmission of tick-borne diseases only requires the undetected bite from one infected tick. Consequently, residents are strongly encouraged to take additional precautions to prevent their exposure to tick-borne diseases.

How to prevent tick bites when outside

When in areas that have ticks:

- Wear closed-toe shoes, long-sleeved shirts and pants;
- Pull your socks over your pant legs to prevent ticks crawling up your legs;
- Wear light-coloured clothing to spot ticks more easily;
- Use insect repellent containing DEET or Icaridin on exposed skin and clothing; and
- When hiking, stay on paths and avoid contact with overgrown brush.

When returning from outdoors:

- Shower or bathe within two hours to wash off any ticks that may not have been completely attached;
- Put clean and dry outdoor clothes in a dryer on high heat for at least 10 minutes to kill any remaining ticks;
- Do a full body check for ticks. Some ticks are quite small (the size of a pin-head or freckle), so look carefully; and
- Regularly check children and pets after they have been outside. Carefully remove all ticks.

When possible, keep dogs and cats out of the woods as they can carry infected ticks into homes and yards. If pets venture out into the woods, remember to check them for ticks.

For more information, talk to your health care provider or your local Public Health. Information is also available on the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness website at <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/CDPC/lyme.asp>

References

1. Public Health Agency of Canada. Lyme disease. Available from: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/lyme/educat-eng.php>
2. Stafford, KC. Tick management handbook; an integrated guide for homeowners, pest control operators, and public health officials for the prevention of tick-associated disease. Revised Edition [Internet]. Connecticut, New England: The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station; 2007 [cited 2014 November 5]. Available from: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/CAES/DOCUMENTS/Publications/Bulletins/b1010pdf.pdf?la=en>