

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 the grass mowed
- Clearing leaf litter and using woodchip barriers have been documented to help reduce ticks on the lawn
- 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 or exclude deer by fencing
- Move firewood piles and bird feeders away from residences
- 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 and xeriscape (drier or less water demanding) landscape practices
- Create woodchip, mulch, or gravel borders at least 3 meters wide between lawn and woods or stonewalls
- Consider decking, tile, gravel and border or container plantings on areas near the house or used often

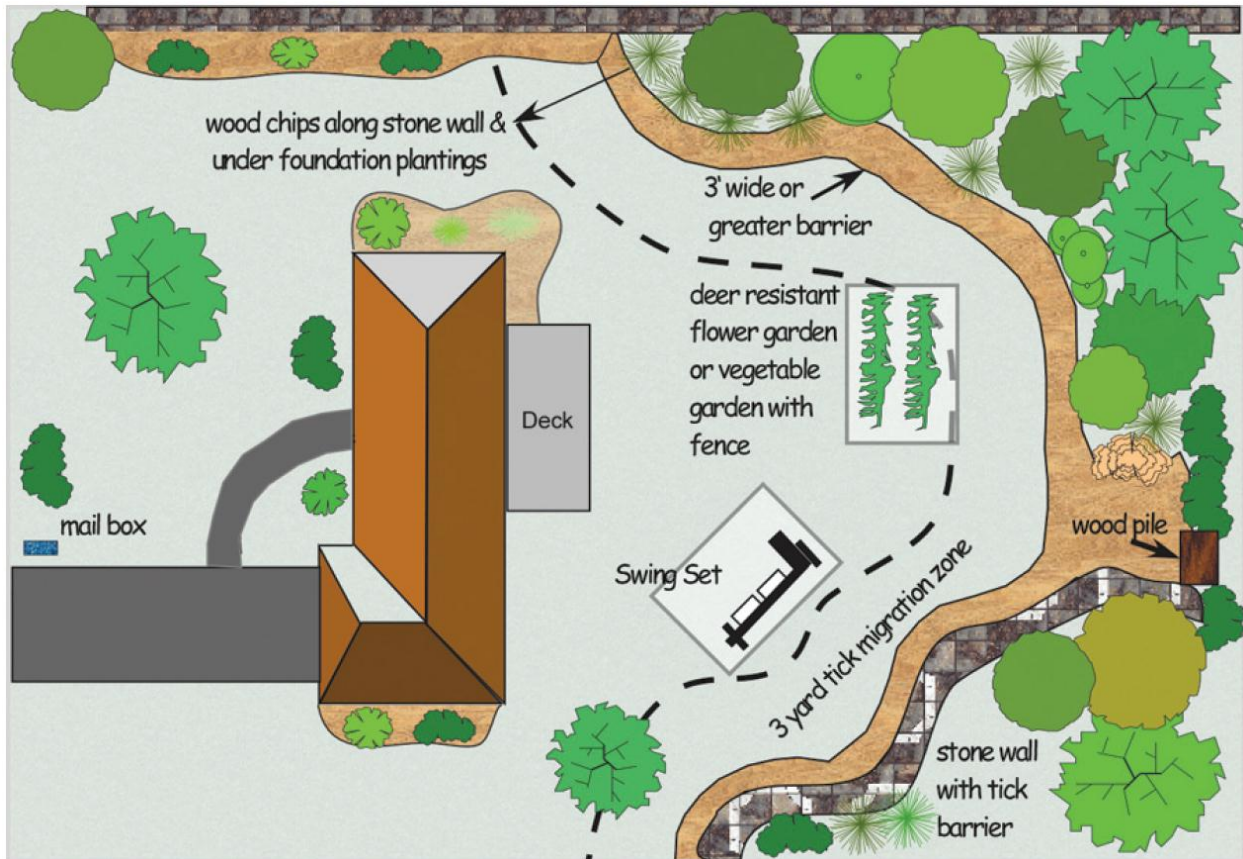


Image Source: Stafford, KC. Tick management handbook; an integrated guide for homeowners, pest control operators, and public health officials for the prevention of tick-associated disease.

Note that while landscape management practices can minimize the numbers of primary hosts and ticks, it alone may not reduce the likelihood of infection 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;
- 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.

Keep dogs and cats out of the woods. Pets can, however, carry infected ticks into homes and yards. If dogs and cats venture out into the woods, remember to check for tick bites.

For more information, talk to your health care provider or your local Public Health. Information is also available on the NS Dept. 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: <http://www.ct.gov/caes/lib/caes/documents/publications/bulletins/b1010.pdf>