

**From:** [Fields, Debbie](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Natural Lawn Ordinance  
**Date:** Monday, August 5, 2024 9:44:09 AM

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Alders,

Following please find a message that was received in the Council Office inbox.

Best,  
Debbie Fields  
Program Assistant 2  
Common Council Office  
608-266-4297

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**From:** Noelle Chambers <nkchambers11@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 5, 2024 9:40 AM  
**To:** Conklin, Nikki <district9@cityofmadison.com>  
**Cc:** council <council@cityofmadison.com>  
**Subject:** Natural Lawn Ordinance

Some people who received this message don't often get email from [nkchambers11@gmail.com](mailto:nkchambers11@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Alder Conklin,

It's been brought to my attention that the updated plan for the pending "Tall Grass Lawn" ordinance amendment is to eliminate all of the new language around native plants. This is great news and so much simpler for residents who want to add native plants to their landscapes without needing to (or thinking they need to) register their yards.

It is important that Madison residents are encouraged and supported by the City to add native plants to their yards in order to increase biodiversity and support insects, birds, and wildlife.

I want to express my gratitude and support for the new version 2 of the upcoming amendment "Amending Section 27.05 of the Madison General Ordinances to refine lawn and property maintenance provisions." linked here: <https://madison.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6806240&GUID=DCDBE972-94F1-4B3C-B5DC-F518F7874254&Options=ID%7CText%7C&Search=83601&FullText=1>

I look forward to these changes being made!

Thank you,  
Noelle Chambers  
District 9 Resident

**From:** [c d](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#)  
**Subject:** 83601 Amending Section 27.05 (Re lawn maintenance)  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 6, 2024 11:21:18 AM

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Hello,

As an urban dweller with a very small yard and not a lot of nature space in my day to day life - I wholeheartedly agree with the input you and city council have received from Wild Ones Madison and think this proposed ordinance needs to go back to the drawing board.. As Wild Ones have indicated all that's needed is the noxious weed ordinance + perhaps some language re: not allowing one person's vegetation to encroach on public space or private property of others. We dont need to get into micromanaging plant heights and even such vague phrases as "well maintained" is problematic. Who defines "well maintained"? One person's weed patch is another's re-wilded pollinator habitat.

The presence of invasives and noxious weeds, IE those we've deemed to be not good for health or environment, is all the proof we need of a 'neglected" or poorly maintained yard . Does there need to be anything else said? Lets not legislate esthetics. Why cant the person who likes their wide expanse of short, mowed grass be free to enjoy that, while those who like a shaggier landscape with bees and butterflies and grasses waving in the breeze are free to enjoy that.

Also the draft I read isnt clear what exactly its referring to. Maybe a yard that is grass and prairie plants is more akin to a "garden" than a lawn, so would that be exempt from this ordinance? Please clarify.

Thank you for considering my input.  
Cathy Debevec  
1885 E Main St., Madison, WI

**From:** [Karen Ecklund](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#)  
**Subject:** Item 83 (Legistar 83601).  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 6, 2024 12:28:28 PM

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Dear Council: I agree with Wild Ones position on lawns. More emphasis is needed on property owners controlling invasive weeds on their properties. With this year's excessive rainfall three plants in particular are invading neighborhoods: creeping bellflower, bishop's weed, and tree of heaven. More research is needed on these common invaders and how they're destroying our urban yards and alleys. Guidance to property owners would be helpful.  
Karen Ecklund, Greenbush Neighborhood.

**From:** [mike engel](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#); [May, Gregg](#)  
**Subject:** 83601 Amending Section 27.05 of the Madison General Ordinances to refine lawn and property maintenance provisions.  
**Date:** Sunday, August 4, 2024 10:38:32 AM

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Some people who received this message don't often get email from mik3eng3l@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Re: August 5 Sustainable Committee Agenda and August 6 Madison Common Council Agenda (link below)

Please ask City Attorneys to review your proposed changes in regards to compliance with The Endangered Species Act. I'm a biologist with the agency that regulates endangered species. I am also a resident of Madison. Madison is in the high potential range for the Rusty Patch Bumble Bee (see map link below). City ordinances requiring the destruction of endangered species habitat may violate federal law. Rusty patch bumble bees need access to nectar resources throughout the year from very early spring to fall. The greater the diversity of nectar resources the better. Residual vegetation (leaf and stem litter) aids in overwintering of queen bees for future generations. Limiting pesticide use is very beneficial especially not using neonicotinoids or plant material raised with neonicotinoids.

<https://www.fws.gov/species/rusty-patched-bumble-bee-bombus-affinis/map>

The comments provided by the Wild Ones are excellent. I do not support the proposed changes or the existing ordinance.

Mike Engel  
826 Jenifer St

Sustainable Madison Committee and Common Council Link to ordinance and comments  
<https://madison.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6806240&GUID=DCDBE972-94F1-4B3C-B5DC-F518F7874254>

**From:** [Pilar Gomez-Ibanez](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#); [May, Gregg](#); [Sustainable Madison Committee](#); [Rummel, Marsha](#)  
**Subject:** Please oppose Legistar 83601  
**Date:** Monday, August 5, 2024 1:06:52 PM

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Dear Alders and Members of the Sustainable Madison Committee,

I'm writing to oppose Legistar 83601, amending Section 27.05 of the Madison General Ordinances to refine lawn and property maintenance provisions (item #2 on the Sustainable Madison Committee's 8-5-24 agenda, and item #83 on the Common Council's 8-6-24 agenda).

The substitute version is an improvement, eliminating changes related to registration and enforcement of "Native Tall Grass Lawn Areas." However, it can be made better still by striking subjective language like "well-maintained appearance," clearly defining terms like "lawn" and distinguishing between "lawn" and "garden" areas, more strongly encouraging the planting of native plants and grasses, and emphasizing the elimination of noxious weeds.

I strongly support all the points made by the Wild Ones in their excellent letter -- they've said it better and more thoroughly than I can! Please consider their suggestions to help move our city away from chemically-treated, monoculture lawn that provides more ecological harm than benefit, and toward healthy, abundant, native plantings that help pollinators, birds, wildlife, our water and soil, and us.

Thank you for your consideration, and for all the work you do for our city.

Sincerely,  
Pilar Gomez-Ibanez  
1326 Dewey Ct

**From:** [Pilar Gomez-Ibanez](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#); [Rummel, Marsha](#); [May, Gregg](#); [Sustainable Madison Committee](#)  
**Subject:** further comments on Legistar 83601, lawn and property maintenance  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 6, 2024 3:40:25 PM

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Dear Alders,

After listening to the Sustainable Madison Committee yesterday, I want to follow up on my previous comments re. amending Section 27.05 on lawn and property maintenance.

I greatly appreciated the SMC's discussion and desire to add language that explicitly allows and encourages native plants. However, I think their recommended language change in 3(f) creates unintended confusion. I think they are recommending the first sentence of 3(f) be changed to delete "but not limited to common species of grass" and replace it with "intentionally planted native vegetation or non-native grasses." The resulting sentence, especially with the verb "shall" and the deletion of "but not limited to," appears to exclude intentionally planted NON-native vegetation, which is common in many yards and gardens (peonies, daylilies, potatoes, etc.). This is potentially confusing.

I think it is still useful to consider two points made in the Wild Ones' letter -- defining "lawn," and defining and explicitly allowing native no-mow lawn. Native no-mow lawns may exceed 8" (they typically grow 6"-1' according to [Prairie Nursery](#)). They are a more ecologically-beneficial replacement for non-native turf grass, and it would be great to have them clearly allowed in "lawn areas" by this ordinance.

Thank you for considering these hair-splitting comments, and for all your work!

Sincerely,  
Pilar Gomez-Ibanez  
1326 Dewey Ct

**From:** [Janet Murphy](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#)  
**Subject:** Start over with GRASS ordinance  
**Date:** Monday, August 5, 2024 3:53:48 PM

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Some people who received this message don't often get email from janetmusicrn@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear alders,

We need to rethink yards and lawns. Madison loves native yard plantings and they are good for us ([why lawns are bad](#)).

Arguably half of Madison homeowners, and nearly all of my neighbors in the Greenbush, are already out of compliance with what is being proposed.

The city's interest should include just three things: **safety, aesthetics, and reducing invasive non-native species**. Keep it simple.

Respectfully,  
Janet Murphy

**From:** [Alan Ng](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#)  
**Subject:** comments on grass ordinance  
**Date:** Sunday, August 4, 2024 11:30:02 PM

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Madison City Council,

For Tuesday's 8/6 council meeting I would like to submit a comment related to agenda item #83 "Amending Section 27.05 of the Madison General Ordinances to refine lawn and property maintenance provisions."

I strongly support the statement previously submitted to you by "Wild Ones Madison" at <https://madison.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13188310&GUID=AC477B6E-3A49-4A55-8A6F-8A8EFD024111>

That is, I agree that Madison should repeal entirely the existing Natural Lawn Ordinance, instead define what a "lawn" is and then clarify that all other plants are "garden", which existing ordinances already govern.

This seems far more pragmatic, enforceable, and logically self-consistent than either the status quo or the proposed revision.

I'm a Madison resident at 509 S. Prospect Ave. 53711

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Alan Ng . Madison, Wisconsin, USA  
alan@alan-ng.net . <https://www.alan-ng.net>



**From:** [annewalker@homelandgarden.com](mailto:annewalker@homelandgarden.com)  
**To:** [All Alders](#)  
**Subject:** 83601 Amending Section 27.05 Madison General Ordinance re lawn and property  
**Date:** Sunday, August 4, 2024 2:43:54 PM  
**Attachments:** [WPM\\$88SM.PM\\$](#)

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Dear Alders

please see the comment letter below re 83601 Amending Section 27.05 Madison General ordinance. Madison Wild Ones also has provided helpful and important suggestions re the change.

Best, Anne Walker

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Dear Sustainable Madison Committee,

I appreciate your work to update Madison's natural lawn ordinance. I appreciate the changes in the second draft, and also believe that additional clarification is needed.

As worded, it appears that all landscaping and plantings, including native grasses, sedges, and flowering plants could not exceed eight inches in height. This requirement would be a big game changer in the land of landscaping where many beautiful and desired plants exceed 8 " in height. In addition, this would exclude many gorgeous and much needed native plants. The current draft states,

"Except for plantings in terraces...all lawns, lawn areas, and terraces, including grasses and vegetation not intentionally planted...shall be maintained so as not to exceed eight (8) inches in height."

With deletion of all references to "natural landscape areas" in 27.05(2)(f), it's unclear whether the terms "lawns" and "lawn areas" are intended to include flowering plants or not. If the intent is to allow for flowering plants, but not native grasses or sedges to exceed eight inches, this should be clearly defined. However, I believe it is essential to allow for native grasses and sedges. Although they can grow higher than eight inches, they provide "essential habitat and shelter" for pollinators (Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2024). Native plants, including grasses, provide the backbone to a healthy ecosystem, helping to provide food and habitat for pollinators and birds, which in many cases, are diminishing.

Refining the proposed amendment to remove ambiguous language and to provide clear terminology will serve the public and our native pollinators well.

Respectfully,

Anne Walker

Owner, Home Land Garden, LLC

District 6

(no attachments)

