

Rutherford County

FROM THE GROUND UP



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Tennessee Smart Yard Program

Have you noticed how many “smart” things there are today? The obvious one is the smart phone as anywhere you go you see people using them. Heck, sometimes folks even talk on them! There are smart watches, smart speakers, smart thermostats, and smart houses to name a few more. Some people have smart dogs and smart kids too! But, have you heard of a smart yard? Yes, you read it right, a smart yard.



The University of Tennessee Extension has developed the Tennessee Smart Yard program. This program guides Tennesseans on practices they can apply in their outdoor spaces to create healthier, more ecologically-sound landscapes. Nine principles of stewardship serve as the foundation for the program. The principles are Right Plant, Right Place; Manage Soils and Mulch; Reduce, Reuse, Recycle; Water Efficiently; Fertilize Appropriately; Manage Yard Pests; Reduce Stormwater and Pollutants; Provide for Wildlife; and Protect Waters Edge. Program participants learn about the nine foundational



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principles through a series of online modules with 25–40-minute videos taught by Extension and water resource professionals. Each of the principles have a number of stewardship actions participants can perform in their yards. Each action is assigned a value from 1-3 inches. Participants work through their workbook completing stewardship actions and check their progress with their “yardstick” (action checklist). Once they’ve completed actions equaling 36 inches, they have a Smart Yard!

This program is free and is available entirely online. It’s self-paced so participants can take as much time as necessary to complete sufficient stewardship actions to achieve Smart Yard status. Once they’ve completed at least 36 inches of stewardship actions, participants can have their yard certified as a Tennessee Smart Yard by following the online directions. Certified Smart Yard signs to display in the landscape are available for purchase, but aren’t required to achieve certified status.

Folks can register for the Tennessee Smart Yard program online at tnyards.utk.edu and download the workbook and yardstick and get started. Please call us at the Extension office at 615-898-7710 if you have questions about the program.

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