



# Survey on Consumer Preferences for Residential Landscapes along Streams

Virginia I. Lohr, Ph.D and Rita L. Hummel, Ph.D.

Washington State University

A survey of consumer preferences for residential landscapes along streams was developed after consultation with specialists from Washington State University, Washington Department of Ecology, and the City of Puyallup. The survey consisted of 20 digitally enhanced streamside residential landscape photos created from photos of home landscapes on waterfront property in western Washington. A single generic home was selected from one of the photos and used to replace the home in each photo.

The photos were categorized based on the amount of turf grass used in each landscape. The categories were no turf, some turf, and nearly all turf (Figure 1).

In the final survey, each of the 20 home landscape photos was accompanied by the same four questions. Requests to complete the surveys were sent to three groups of potential participants.

1. Residents living in properties whose parcels abutted Clarks Creek.
2. Residents living within one mile of the centerline of Clarks Creek who were not part of the first group and residents living on one of the smaller waterways in Puyallup.
3. Washington State Department of Ecology water quality professionals.

The goal of this project was to develop recommendations to encourage the adoption of residential landscapes that will improve water quality.

## Results

The results showed that residents living on or near Clarks Creek and other waterways gave landscapes without turf a rating of 2.1 (Table 1). This indicates a strong negative reaction to such designs, showing that most residential respondents do not want landscapes without turf for their own yards.

**Table 1.** Responses of residents living on or near Clarks Creek and other waterways in Puyallup to the question: "If you owned a house on a creek or stream, how much would you want this as your yard?" compared to Department of Ecology water quality professionals' responses to the question: "Would this landscape be good for water quality?" by amount of turf in the photograph of a residential streamside landscape.

Amount of turf in the landscape photograph	Residents response to "How much would you want this as your yard?" <sup>z</sup>	Department of Ecology response to "Would this landscape be good for water quality?" <sup>z</sup>
No turf	2.1 c <sup>y</sup>	3.5 a <sup>y</sup>
Some turf	3.2 a	2.7 b
Mostly turf	2.7 b	1.6 c

<sup>z</sup>Responses are based on a five-point scale, from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).

<sup>y</sup>Means within a column followed by a different letter are significantly different at the 5% level.

While residential respondents do not want turf-free landscapes, they also do not have a strong desire for landscapes that are nearly all turf. These were rated at 2.7, which is just below neutral and indicates that convincing homeowners to adopt landscapes that are not dominated by turf may be successful.

Residential respondents rated landscapes with some turf, those that were intermediate between none and nearly all, the highest. These were the only landscapes that received ratings above neutral, indicating that these were the only landscapes that residential respondents were likely to consider adopting for their own homes.

## Conclusions

Residents do not want turf-free landscapes for their own homes. Their dislike of landscapes with no turf was stronger than their dislike of landscapes dominated by turf. To encourage the adoption of residential landscapes that will contribute to improved water quality, examples that include some turf are likely to be more successful than ones that are turf-free.

**Figure 1.** Example of images from the survey that represent different amounts of turf: no turf (top), some turf (center), and mostly turf (bottom).