



Official Policy Document: Landscaping & Grounds Rules & Procedures
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SECTION 1.0: Landscaping and Grounds Maintenance

1.1 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of these guidelines is to maintain a harmonious, safe, and aesthetically pleasing environment throughout the community. All landscaping choices shall be appropriate in character, habitat, species, size (both installed and mature), number, and arrangement for their purpose and surroundings. All additions or alterations must be visually harmonious in color, configuration, detail, material, scale, and style with the architectural design of the primary residence and adjacent properties.

1.2 Application Requirements

No formal application or prior approval is required for standard landscaping maintenance or minor plant replacements, provided they adhere strictly to the guidelines set forth in this section. See Sections 5.0 & 6.0. for application or prior approval requirements for Tree Removal, Planting, Turfgrass, or Sod.

1.3 Contractor Services and Homeowner Service-Day Prep

The Association utilizes a third-party Landscaping Contractor to provide regular lawn mowing and pesticide treatments to all standard lots.

1. **Debris and Obstruction Removal:** On scheduled landscaping service days, yards must be kept entirely free of hoses, lawn ornaments, lawn furniture, toys, pet supplies, or any other items or debris.
2. **Service Forfeiture:** If any items are left on the lawn on a scheduled service day, the contractor will skip the Lot. Services will not resume for that Lot until the next scheduled service day, provided the obstructions have been removed.

1.4 Contractor Service Opt-Out Policy

Homeowners may request to opt out of the Association-provided pesticide and/or landscaping services by submitting a written request to the Board.

1. **Owner Responsibility:** Homeowners who opt out assume full, sole responsibility for the regular upkeep and maintenance of their green spaces.
2. **Maintenance Standards:** Opt-out properties must be maintained to a standard consistent with the rest of the community. This includes, but is not limited to, regular weed removal, grass trimming, edging, and tree/shrub maintenance.

1.5 Plot, Bed, and Edging Specifications

1. **Landscape Edging:** Decorative or functional landscape edging around flowerbeds or walkways is permitted but **shall not exceed eight (8) inches** in height.



2. **Property Encroachment:** Landscape additions, beds, or alterations shall not obstruct, overhang, or encroach upon any neighboring property line.

1.6 General Upkeep and Plant Maintenance

1. **Flowerbeds:** Flowerbeds must be kept free of weeds and grass, remain clearly edged, and be mulched a minimum of **once per calendar year**.
2. **Pruning:** Trees, shrubs, and bushes must be pruned regularly to maintain a neat appearance and promote plant health.
3. **Dead Material Removal:** Any dead plant materials, including flowers, shrubs, and bushes, must be promptly removed from the property.
4. **Dead Tree Removal:** Dead trees pose a safety hazard and must be completely cut down and removed from the property **within sixty (60) days** of die-off or notification from the Board.

1.7 Safety, Traffic, and Infrastructure Clearances

1. **Vehicular Sightlines:** Shrubs, hedges, trees, or any other plant material shall not restrict vehicular sightlines or obstruct the view of neighbors when accessing, entering, or exiting the street.
2. **Right-of-Way Encroachment:** Vegetation of any kind—including trees, flowers, shrubs, hedges, or groundcover—is strictly prohibited from growing over, hanging into, or obstructing:
 - Public or shared driveways
 - Street curbs
 - Sidewalks or pedestrian walkways
 - Traffic signs or street lights

1.8 Maintenance of Landscape and Driveway Islands

Certain properties feature standalone landscape islands or driveway separation islands within their lot boundaries. While these unique features add architectural character, they require dedicated upkeep.

1. **Homeowner Responsibility:** Unless explicitly stated otherwise in writing by the Board, all landscape islands located within a homeowner's property lines are the sole maintenance responsibility of the homeowner.
2. **Aesthetic Standards:** Homeowners must keep these islands looking neat, clean, and well-maintained. This requires:
 - Regular weeding and grass trimming to prevent an unkempt appearance.
 - Refreshing mulch or approved ground cover a minimum of **once per calendar year** to match neighboring beds.
 - Keeping any trees, shrubs, or ornamental grasses planted on the island neatly pruned.
3. **Safety and Clearance:** Plant materials on driveway or landscape islands must be kept trimmed so they do not spill over into the driveway or street, and they must never grow to a height or density that restricts vehicular sightlines or blocks the view of oncoming traffic.



SECTION 2.0: Lake Maintenance, Mailboxes and Entryways

2.1 Lakefront Best Practices, Environmental Care, and HOA Maintenance

To protect the community's natural ecosystem, maintain water quality, and prevent erosion, all homeowners with lakefront properties (or those utilizing community water features) must adhere to the following rules:

1. **HOA Annual Trimming and Heavy Maintenance:** The Association provides scheduled landscaping services for the lake common areas, including an annual trimming, clearing, and maintenance cycle of the shoreline vegetation, buffer zones, and surrounding drainage easements. This major annual service is handled strictly by the HOA's designated marine or landscaping contractors to manage invasive species, stabilize banks, and maintain proper community water flow.
2. **Shoreline Stabilization:** Homeowners must maintain the shoreline on their property to prevent erosion between annual HOA maintenance cycles. Any structural changes to the shoreline, including installing riprap (stones), retaining walls, or sand, require prior written Board approval.
3. **Runoff and Fertilizer Management:** To prevent hazardous algae blooms and protect aquatic life, the use of fertilizers and chemical pesticides by homeowners is strictly prohibited within fifteen (15) feet of the high-water mark.
4. **Debris and Aquatic Weeds:** Outside of the annual HOA clearing, homeowners are responsible for keeping their immediate shoreline free of accumulated trash, lawn clippings, and excessive dead organic debris. Aquatic weeds or invasive plants must be managed in accordance with local environmental regulations.
5. **Water Obstructions:** No private docks, watercraft launches, fences, or permanent structures may extend into the lake or block community maintenance access routes needed for the annual trimming equipment.
6. No feeding, boarding, harboring, or caring for the community's ducks, geese, wildlife, etc. Feeding of Water Fowl is prohibited.

2.2 Mailbox and Pet Station Uniformity and Upkeep

Mailboxes and pet waste stations are highly visible elements of the neighborhood infrastructure. To maintain community-wide aesthetic continuity and operational standards, the following rules apply:

1. **HOA Ownership:** All mailboxes, mailbox posts, mounting hardware, and pet waste stations are the exclusive property of the Association.
2. **Surrounding Flowerbeds:** The flowerbeds, turf, and landscaping immediately surrounding all mailboxes and pet stations are owned and maintained solely by the HOA. Homeowners are strictly prohibited from planting flowers, adding mulch, installing borders, or otherwise altering these beds.



3. **Damage and Maintenance Reporting:** Because these structures are HOA property, homeowners must not paint, alter, or attempt to repair them. Any damage, leaning posts, or maintenance needs (including requests for pet waste bag refills) must be reported promptly to the HOA management office for contractor repair.
4. **Prohibition of Attachments:** No unapproved decals, stickers, holiday decorations, or ornamental items may be attached to the mailboxes, mailbox posts, or pet stations at any time.

2.3 Entryway Regulations and Flowerbed Restrictions

The front entryway of the neighborhood establishes the visual standard for the entire community. Because the front entryways are the exclusive property of the Association, the following restrictions are strictly enforced:

1. **Porches Disallowed:** Structural porches or front-porch seating areas are disallowed. No homeowner may construct a porch landing or place outdoor furniture (such as chairs, benches, or tables) in these spaces.
2. **Surrounding Flowerbeds:** The flowerbeds flanking or surrounding the front entryway are owned and landscaped exclusively by the HOA. Homeowners are strictly prohibited from planting their own flora, removing existing plants, digging, or messing up these beds in any manner.

SECTION 3.0: Animal Waste and Pet Stations

3.1 Animal Waste and Pet Stations

To help maintain a clean, safe, and enjoyable community for all residents, the following pet regulations apply:

1. **Community Pet Waste Stations:** Community pet waste stations may be installed if a resident is willing and able to maintain and service the station. If you are interested in installing a pet waste station in your area, please contact the Board for approval.
2. **Leash Requirement:** All animals must be physically restrained at all times while outdoors (e.g., on a leash). Pets on a leash, tether, or temporary run must remain under the direct supervision of their owner at all times.
3. **Prohibited Tethers and Outdoor Housing:** Permanent tethers, runs, or tie-out lines are prohibited. Outdoor structures intended for the housing or confinement of animals are not permitted.
4. **Pet Waste:** Owners are responsible for immediately removing and properly disposing of their pet's waste. Waste must be placed in the owner's own trash receptacle or another approved, sealed waste container.
5. **Nuisance Animals:** Animals that create a nuisance are prohibited and may be subject to enforcement under Cobb County Code Section 10-9. A nuisance animal includes one that:



- a. Damages, soils, defiles, urinates, or defecates on property other than its owner's property.
 - b. Barks, howls, or creates excessive noise continuously for more than 15 minutes.
 - c. Causes a serious disturbance that interferes with a neighbor's reasonable use and enjoyment of their property.
6. **Permitted Animals:** Only common household pets may be kept within the community. Agricultural or livestock animals are not permitted on any lot.

For additional information, please refer to **Section 6 of the Amended and Restated Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, Restrictions, and Bylaws**.

SECTION 4.0: Landscaping & Grounds Standards

4.1 General Information

These Standards are set forth and published by the Barns Mill Lake Homeowners Association (BML). They serve as the basis for a common understanding of design objectives and standards for all current and future residents. These guidelines are effective July 17, 2026, and supersede all prior standards.

This document outlines the overall design standards of the community. The Barns Mill Lake Homeowners Association Board of Directors (BML HOA Board) intends to be fair and objective in the design review process and impartial in the understanding of individual goals.

4.2 Scope of Authority & Bylaws Compliance

These standards are established in accordance with Section 9 of the BML Bylaws, which grants the Architectural Control Committee (ACC) the authority to approve or deny any proposed exterior modification, structure, or property alteration. For matters regarding Tree Removal and Planting and Turfgrass and Sod, the ACC delegates this review and approval responsibility to the Landscaping & Grounds Director.

4.3 Application and Approval Process

To submit a request, visit the Landscaping & Grounds portal at bmlcommunity.com/about/landscaping/ and complete the following:

1. **Submit the Application:** Complete the Landscaping & Grounds request form online through our website portal. Applicants must provide specific details, digital photos/diagrams, dimensions, and material specifications for the planned project. The homeowner bears sole legal and financial responsibility for the accuracy of all dimensions, property lines, and setbacks submitted (See Section 24.10 Accuracy of Information of the Architectural Control Design & Maintenance Standards).
2. **Your Project Category:** In the message field of the application, explicitly state which of the two areas your project falls under:
 - Tree Removal and Planting
 - Turfgrass and Sod



3. **Receive Notification:** Once the Landscaping & Grounds Director has processed the application, the homeowner will receive a formal response email confirming the approval, conditional approval, or denial status of the request. No physical site work may commence without an official approval notification. Approvals are subject to expiration timeframes (See Section 24.9 Expiration of Approval Architectural Control Design & Maintenance Standards).

4.4 Disruption & Neighbor Notification

All planned Landscaping & Grounds modifications, replacements, repairs, and maintenance that could cause disruption to an adjacent neighbor's lot or home—including but not limited to excessive noise, structural access limitations, or the presence of parked commercial work vehicles—must be formally attested to the Landscaping & Grounds Director via the website submission form.

- **Notice Period:** At least two (2) weeks' notice must be provided to the Landscaping & Grounds Director and affected neighbors for any planned work, except in the case of verified emergency repairs.
- **Neighbor Access and Acknowledgment:** If a project requires physical access through or onto an adjacent lot, the executing homeowner must obtain prior consent (written, verbal, or otherwise) from the affected neighbor. By submitting the Landscaping & Grounds application, the homeowner formally attests that all necessary neighbor notifications and access consents have been secured.

SECTION 5.0: Tree Removal and Planting Approval

Application Requirements

1. An approved application is required prior to the removal or intentional destruction of any live tree measuring six (6) inches or greater in diameter when measured at a height of one (1) foot above the ground. This includes multi-trunk ornamental trees (like Crepe Myrtles) where the combined diameter of all trunks totals six (6) inches or more.
2. No application is required to remove small trees, invasive saplings, or underbrushed woody vegetation measuring less than six (6) inches in diameter at one (1) foot above the ground.
3. No application is required to plant new trees on your property, provided they are planted as individual landscape features.

Specific Guidelines

1. Homeowners are prohibited from cutting, pruning, or disturbing any trees, limbs, or vegetation located outside their official property lines, within community common areas, or inside designated neighborhood natural woods and buffer zones.
2. The Landscaping and Grounds Director will generally approve applications for large tree removal under the following conditions:
 - The tree is completely dead, dying, or structurally hollowed out.
 - An arborist determines the tree poses an immediate danger to people, residential structures, or overhead utility lines.



- The tree's root system is causing verified physical damage to home foundations, driveways, retaining walls, or underground utilities.

Maintenance Guidelines

1. Stump Grinding Mandate: When a tree is cut down, the remaining stump must be professionally ground down flush with or below the surrounding soil level. The remaining hole must be backfilled with topsoil and seeded with matching lawn grass or covered with clean mulch within thirty (30) days of the tree removal.
2. Debris and Log Removal: All logs, large limbs, wood chips, and organic debris resulting from a tree removal project must be hauled away and disposed of off-site by the homeowner or tree service contractor. Piling logs or branches on the driveway or street past standard weekly trash pickup schedules is prohibited.
3. Dead Wood Mitigation: Homeowners must routinely inspect mature trees on their lot and prune away large, hanging, dead branches that pose a safety hazard to pedestrians or neighboring properties.

SECTION 6.0: Turfgrass and Sod Approval

Application Requirements

1. An approved application is required prior to the addition, removal, or intentional destruction of sod.

Specific Guidelines

1. Approved Turfgrass Species: To maintain visual harmony throughout the community, replacement sod must match the pre-existing or community-standard turfgrass species (e.g., Bermuda, Zoysia, Fescue, or St. Augustine). Mixing distinctly different grass types within a single contiguous lawn area is prohibited.
2. Alternative Ground Covers: Homeowners wishing to replace sodded areas with alternative ground covers (such as pine straw, mulch, river rock, or clover) must obtain explicit approval from the Landscaping Committee. Complete removal of front-yard sod in favor of full xeriscaping or rock beds is generally restricted.
3. Encroachment and Edging: Sod installation must terminate precisely at the homeowner's property line. No sodding or regrading may alter the established drainage swales or negatively impact stormwater runoff onto neighboring lots or community common areas.

Maintenance Guidelines

1. Establishment Watering Period: Newly installed sod must be watered adequately during its critical rooting phase (typically the first 14 to 30 days) to prevent die-off. Homeowners must adhere to local municipal water restrictions but are expected to keep new turf viable.



2. Erosion Control: If sod removal or replacement leaves bare soil exposed, the homeowner must implement immediate erosion control measures (such as straw matting or temporary silt fencing) to prevent mud and sediment from washing onto sidewalks, streets, or adjacent properties.
3. Minimum Standards of Care: All sodded lawns must be routinely mowed, edged, weeded, and fertilized to maintain a healthy, neat appearance. Front and side yards must not be allowed to grow past a maximum height of [e.g., four (4) to five (5) inches], and dead or bare patches exceeding [e.g., two (2) square feet] must be re-seeded or re-sodded by the homeowner within a reasonable timeframe.