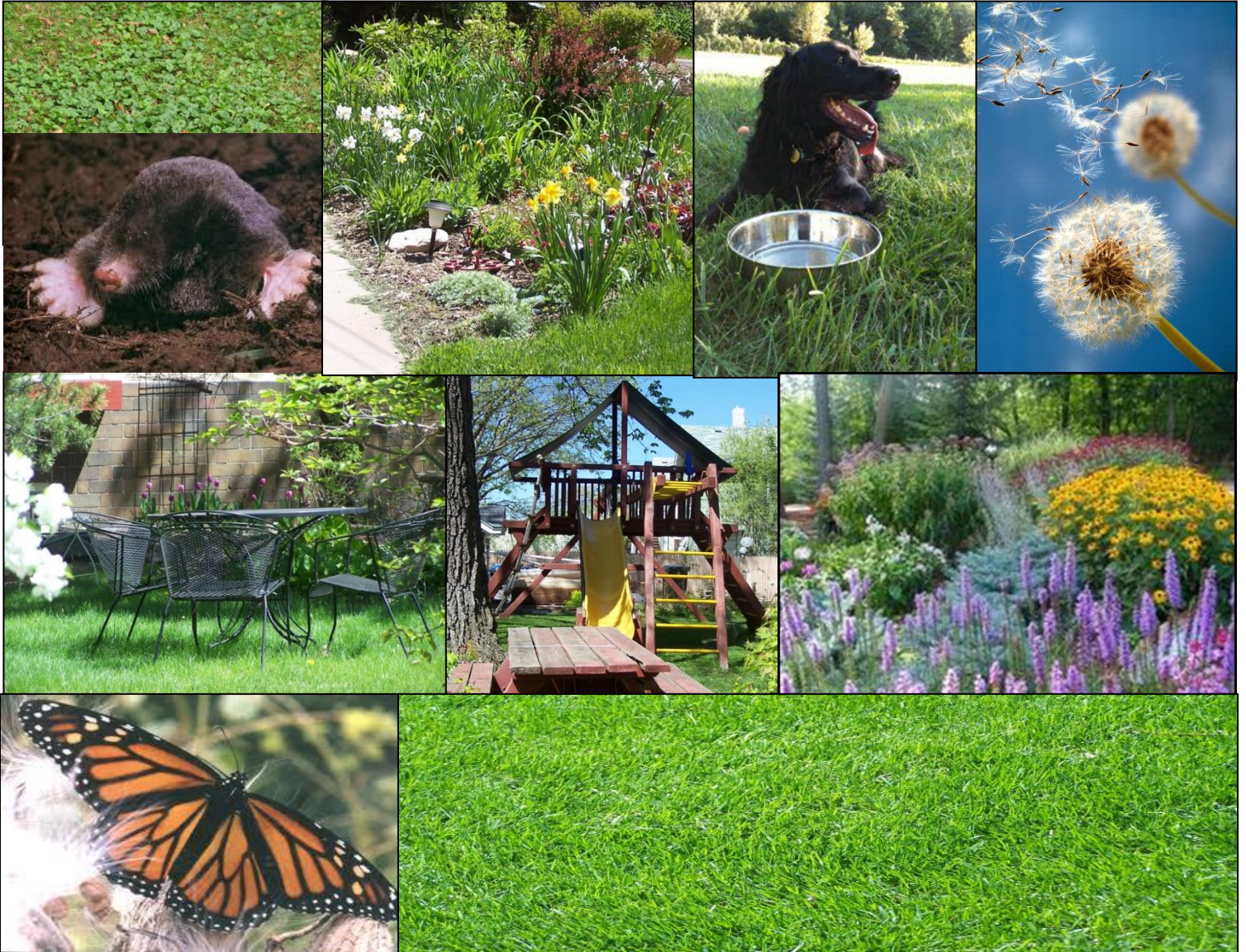


## Yard Care Choices Research

We also need to understand what influences environmental decision-making. Much research has examined (potential) factors that influence our yard care choices. These factors may include (but are not limited to) individual preferences, social norms, city policy, and ecological understanding.



As more and more people live in urban and suburban locations, our yards are one of the places where we have direct influence on environmental conditions.



For example, consider this study by researchers at the University of Michigan. They showed participants the pictures below and asked them which yard they would prefer as their own. Take a minute to look at these options. How do you think participants responded?

1



2



3



4



5



The answer is...it depends! The researchers also told the participants one other piece of information: *They also told participants what the yards in the neighborhood looked like.* The majority of the participants selected the type of yard they were told was most common in their neighborhood. *Also*, if they were told two types were common, some participants chose one of the common types, while others chose the other common type. Take a look at the chart on the next page. This illustrates social norms at work.

**Table 3**

Most preferred front yard design in each neighborhood context.

Neighbors' yards	Most preferred front yard design	No. who most preferred this design
Conventional (n = 169)	<b>Conventional front yard design</b>	<b>118</b>
	Mature trees front yard design	11
	Young trees front yard design	30
	50% native garden front yard design	6
	75% native garden front yard design	4
Mixed (n = 163)	<b>Conventional front yard design</b>	<b>61</b>
	Mature trees front yard design	20
	Young trees front yard design	9
	50% native garden front yard design	6
	<b>75% native garden front yard design</b>	<b>67</b>
Innovative (n = 162)	<b>Conventional front yard design</b>	<b>5</b>
	Mature trees front yard design	18
	Young trees front yard design	7
	50% native garden front yard design	6
	<b>75% native garden front yard design</b>	<b>126</b>

Most preferred in each context is shown in bold.

From Nassauer et al. 2009

Closer to home, the Twin Cities Household Ecosystem Project at the University of Minnesota examined Yard Care Choices in Lino Lakes, Minnesota and Highland Park in St. Paul, Minnesota.

### Learning Activity

Take a minute and read over the study background at

<http://www.tcchp.umn.edu/CurrentResearch/LawnCareChoices/index.htm>

Then, read the findings of the study. You can download that article from the Course Materials page on the web site. The reflection you write will be based on these two articles. (see below)

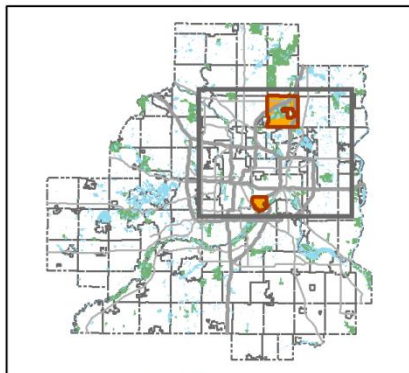
1. **First**, post your reactions or reflections about the findings of the study. (For example, are any of the findings particularly interesting to you? Are they surprising to you, or would you expect these results?)
2. **Second**, post a reflection of how you might use or build on these results in your own work as a water steward? What other information might be helpful?
3. **Third**, respond to at least two posts regarding how these results may be used or built upon in water stewards' efforts.

Here's a map of the study area.

Twin Cities Metro Area

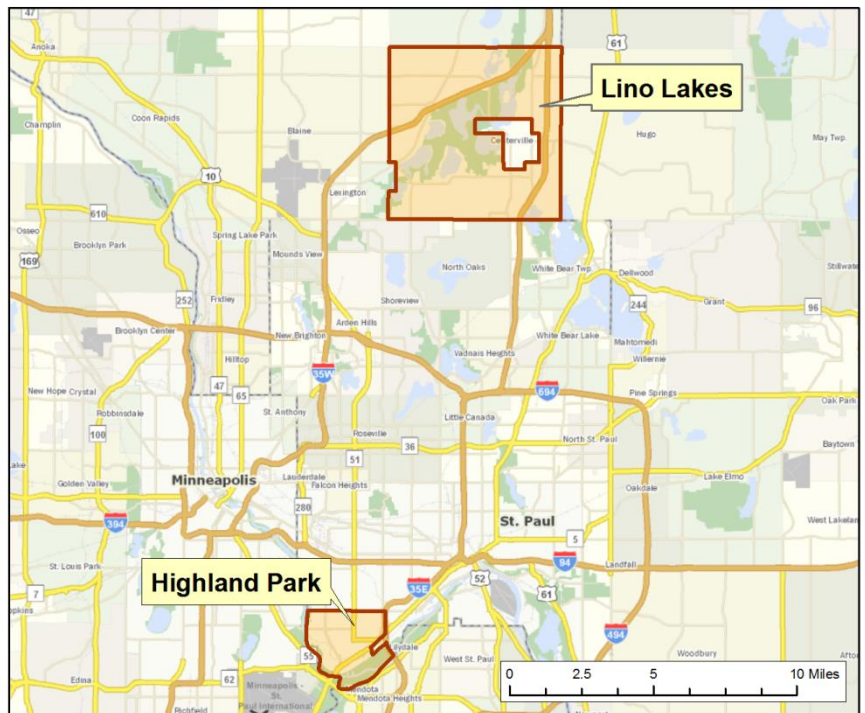


Twin Cities 7-County Metro Area



Data Sources: ESRI, MN DNR, Metropolitan Council, City of St. Paul.

Lawn Care Survey Study Areas



We also examined two questions in more detail: 1) how participants conceptualized their yard as part of the urban ecosystem and 2) what the term 'nature' meant to participants in the context of their yard.

## Learning Activity

You will find two articles posted on the Course Materials page directly under the link for this module. Choose one of these articles to read. (Of course feel free to read both!) After you read the article of your choice (or both):

1. **First**, post your reflection about the article. These are open-ended reflections, but try to address how these articles could be useful to you in your work.
2. **Second**, respond to at least two other people's reflections

Finally, research your city and neighborhood's policies about yard vegetation. Are there any policy restrictions or opportunities that will affect the kinds of yard care choices residents can make?

### **Learning Activity**

Post what you find out about this question. (This will vary by city and even by neighborhood.)

For instance, the city of Minneapolis has the following ordinances that affect yard care choices-

[http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/www/groups/public/@mpd/documents/webcontent/convert\\_279390.pdf](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/www/groups/public/@mpd/documents/webcontent/convert_279390.pdf)

<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/www/groups/public/@regservices/documents/webcontent/wcms1q-066035.pdf>