

## TIPS FOR PASSING THE YARD INSPECTION

### INTRODUCTION

At the annual membership meeting in 1983, the membership directed the Board of Directors and Management to enforce GHI's regulations concerning the minimum upkeep of members' yards and home exteriors. Consequently, GHI established the Community Beautification Program (CBP) which involves annual inspections of members' yards, to ensure compliance with the minimum maintenance standards for homes and yards.

After your yard/home is inspected the completed form will be left for you, indicating:

- **"PASSED"**: Yard requires no additional inspection.
- **"NEEDS SOME WORK"**: Member action needed to remedy deficiencies noted; within 1 day for pet feces, 7 days for turfgrass taller than 10 inches, and 30 days for all other deficiencies. Units are then re-inspected. If cited deficiencies are not corrected within the indicated period, the deficiency is referred to the Fee-for-Service program for correction by GHI staff. Members will be billed at a rate of \$75 per man-hour; one hour minimum.

If you need help in preparing for the inspection or fixing any deficiencies, the [Greenbelt News Review](#) advertises contractors who provide a variety of services for moderate fees. Another source of recommendations are Facebook groups for Greenbelters – just use the "Search this group" line under "Discussion" in the group's left sidebar.

### Preventing and Correcting Deficiencies

#### A. Sheds and Fences

**# 6 Repair or Remove Damaged Fencing:** Fences should be kept in good repair and free of rust, peeling paint and tree branches. Please trim tree branches from your fence. (Trees such as [White Mulberry](#), [Black Locust](#), and [Tree of Heaven](#) are particularly damaging to fences.)

If replacing a fence see GHI Handbook [Section VII Fences](#). The GHI Maintenance Department will remove fences free of charge for members at their request, provided the member agrees not to re-install a replacement fence for 3 years. The [Fence Removal Request Form](#) is available online.

**#15 Repaint Fencing that has Peeling Paint:** When repainting an existing chain link fence, all posts, top rails, and fence fabric must be free of rust and uniformly painted with the approved GHI colors (green, black or brown). Metallic or bright colors are not allowed. Paint (1 qt.) is available free at the GHI warehouse.

**#7 Repair or Remove Damaged Shed:** All sheds must be in compliance with GHI [shed regulations](#), structurally sound, with surfaces free from damage and rust, and properly maintained.

**#15 Scrape and Repaint Shed with Peeling Paint**

## **B. Home Exterior – (from Section III of Member Handbook)**

**#8 Remove Mold/Mildew from Walls:** On block and frame homes with vinyl siding, the exterior should be cleaned if contaminated with mold, mildew, rust and/or grime. The GHI warehouse has 4 pole extension brushes which members can borrow (at no charge) for up to one week to clean their siding. To make the cleaning solution, use a 5-gallon bucket for mixing 1 part bleach to 4 parts water with a small amount of dishwashing liquid to act as a foaming agent. Immerse the brush into the bucket, then stroke along the grain of the siding, from the upper to lower levels of the unit. Do one section of the unit from top to bottom then thoroughly rinse with your garden hose to remove the mildew and the cleaning solution before moving to another section.

### **#9 Scrape Peeling Paint on Block Units and Repaint Them**

- All block exterior wall surfaces must be uniformly painted with clean edges.
- All chipping, cracking, or peeling wall paint must be corrected.
- All exterior wood surfaces (doors and trim) must be properly sealed and protected from moisture damage. All chipping, cracking, or peeling trim paint must be corrected.

**#12 Repair Damaged Window Screens and Storm Doors:** Storm or screen doors must be in good condition; no holes in screening materials, glass intact, and door frame properly sealed or painted. Metal storm doors approved after May 1, 1995, must be an approved trim color (See [Section XI](#) of the Member Handbook for colors). Unfinished storm or screen doors are not allowed.

**#20 Install House Numbers as Required:** The City of Greenbelt requires numbers on all service sides of GHI home. Homes facing courts instead of city streets are also required to display numbers on the garden side.

## **C. Lawn, Hedges, Invasives and Other Plants**

### **#2 Invasive/Noxious Plants:**

- English ivy and wisteria must not be allowed to climb trees or homes. For English ivy in your trees, see [how to remove it without damaging trees](#). English ivy not only can harm the trees it grows up into but once it's high up in trees it bears fruit (berries) which are then eaten and spread by birds throughout the neighborhood. On homes, trim ivy away from walls, foundation, vent openings and crawl space doors.
- Poison ivy in yards must be removed. (See Member Handbook pages 39f14 & g05). See [U.Md info on poison ivy and its control](#).
- Bamboo and English ivy must not spread beyond a member's yard.

**#4 Turfgrass or Weeds over 10" Tall:** Yards with tall grass will be re-inspected again in 7 calendar days. If the grass is not cut on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, a GHI employee will mow the grass without further notice and bill the member \$75 per man-hour, with a one hour minimum charge. See [Best Mowing Practices for a Healthy Lawn](#) from U.Minn.

### **#18 Rake and Remove Leaf Debris from Lawn:**

Lawns must be kept free of all debris (leaves, twigs, paper, etc.) throughout the entire season. Debris on lawns can harm the turf, blow into neighbors' yards, and become unsightly. (The [U.Minn has good info on why and how to remove leaves from lawns](#).)

Members in wooded areas ARE permitted to leave leaf litter on the ground. Leaf litter is also allowed to be raked into garden beds and borders, but with a warning - a thick leaf litter (2" or more) can harbor pests such as ants, roaches, and mice, so should not be used against homes or sheds. Also, to avoid leaves blowing into neighbors' yards, it's helpful to chop them up first, which also speeds their decomposition into compost.

GHI encourages composting of leaf debris. Compost piles must be enclosed and be screened with plants or fences. Members who maintain more than one compost pile or a pile larger than 6' by 6' must request permission from GHI Technical Services staff, who will consider yard size, proposed location, and proposed screening. <https://www.ghi.coop/content/iv-care-ghi-yard> [For further information on composting, contact the City of Greenbelt Public Works Department at 301-474-8004.]

It is illegal to dump leaves in the woodland areas. [Click here](#) for information about the City of Greenbelt's collection services for yard waste, including leaves.

**#19 Cover Bare Spots Larger than 2 sq. ft. with Grass Seed, Plants or Mulch:** Members must cover these bare areas in yards to prevent erosion.

#### **Covering with New Grass Seed**

Members cited for bare ground will be allowed until October 1, to reseed their yards with turf grass. This change has been made because cool season grasses that grow in this region are best established after September 1, when the summer heat subsides. This allowance will be made only in those situations where reseeding of bare spots is a viable option.

See [tips on starting or renovating a lawn](#) from the U.Md Extension Service. [Cornell](#) is famous for its lawn-care research and its resource-conserving recommendations are also appropriate for Greenbelt.

Getting new seed to grow well may be an option for your yard but probably not in cases of heavy pet traffic, children's play areas, or in full shade.

#### **Covering Bare Spots with Plants**

Bare spots can also be turned into garden areas for trees, shrubs, perennials or groundcovers. That means gardening, and for GHI members who garden or want to learn, here are some ways that GHI offers gardening help:

- Spring and fall "Plant Swaps" where even if you have no plants you get free ones to take home (thanks to the Woodlands Committee).
- The Gardening Sub-committee provides pruning advice and demonstrations in member yards, free garden consults for 3 members each spring and fall (picked at random among applicants),

and Open Garden Days when members can visit member gardens and learn from gardeners. Members are also encouraged to join the Gardening Sub-committee to help with these activities as a way to learn.

- See [U.Md's groundcover suggestions](#) and its [tips on growing and maintaining groundcovers](#).

### **Covering Bare Spots with Mulch**

Mulch can be bought from stores or obtained free (shredded leaf mold and wood chip mulch from the City of Greenbelt on Northway or wood chips behind the GHI offices, available during GHI office hours). Pea gravel is also an appropriate mulch but we recommended a landscape border be installed with it to prevent the spread of the gravel to other areas. Another option for high-traffic areas is to fence off that area (for animals or children's playground) and install a layer of durable mulch or stones there.

Especially for high-traffic areas like paths, consider using mulch, woodchips, gravel, or step stones to provide a good walking surface, rather than trying to grow plants there.

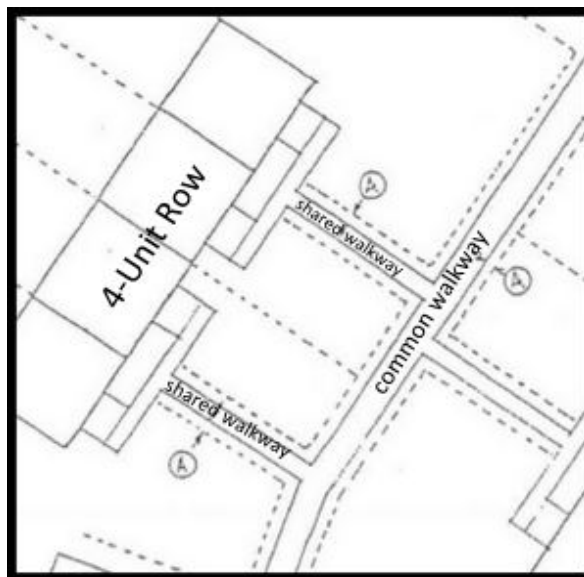
Do not put mulches or woodchips near downspouts or swale areas. In heavy rains they will wash away. Consider using crushed stone or gravel in these areas if you can't get grass to grow. Remember to NOT obstruct the drainage of the swale in your yard. This will cause water to pond and might lead to water damage in your unit.

**#10 Clear Plant Parts and Debris from over or on Walkways.** This refers to shrubs and other plants that reach OVER the walkway and low growing plants or plant debris ON the walkway.

**Which walkways?** Member responsibility for clearing plants over/on walkways applies to ALL walkways bordering their yards. (With regard to snow/ice removal, GHI is responsible for clearing common walkways; members are responsible for shared walkways, per graphic below.)

Hedges and other woody plants growing close to walkways can be a high-maintenance task requiring training on pruning and experience beyond that of most amateur gardeners. Members are directed to the following resources for help in learning to maintain their hedges and other shrubs:

- The Gardening Subcommittee offers on-site training for members during the key pruning times of the year.
- Find reliable pruning advice by Googling "prune" and the shrub name and clicking on links to university websites (those ending in .edu). The pruning nonprofit Plant Amnesty.org is also very reliable.
- [Click here](#) for curated expert videos about pruning these shrubs in early spring: roses, hibiscus,



buddleia, summer-blooming spirea, crepe myrtle, late-blooming hydrangeas, crabapple, juniper and boxwood.

- [Click here](#) for curated videos about pruning these shrubs that bloom later: Forsythia, evergreen azalea, rhododendrons, lilac, deutzia, kerria, mockoranage, weigela, viburnum, St. johnswort, red twig and yellow twig dogwoods, Virginia sweetspire, quince, spring-flowering roses, and spring-blooming spirea.

**#17 Trim Shrubs/Trees Contacting Unit if Obstructing Maintenance:** See pruning information above.

**#11 Keep Hedges Below 36" Height at Driveway or Intersection of Sidewalk with Street:** Thorny plants are not permitted along common walkways, access lanes or court driveways. Poison Ivy must be removed from hedges. See pruning information above.

**#16 Remove Seedling Trees within 3' of Structure or 1' of Fencing:** "Weed trees" that grow wherever the seeds happen to land can become harmful obstructions.

#### **D. Miscellaneous**

**# 1. Pet Feces:** Members are required to clean pet feces from yards on a daily basis. Excessive pet waste is a Greenbelt City Code public health violation that requires immediate attention. If pet waste is not removed, GHI will clean the yard and bill the member accordingly. A \$75 minimum charge will apply.

**#5 Debris or Trash in Yard and #21 Neatly Store Toys, Tools, Yard Items:** [Click here](#) for information about the City of Greenbelt's collection services for yard waste and other unwanted items. Members may also drop off yard waste at the city mulch pile location on Northway with a permit from the receptionist at the Municipal Building.

**#15 Store/Screen Trash Containers (maximum size 32 gallons):** Store trash containers in your trash closet, trash container cabinet, or screened area on the side of the unit from which trash is picked up. <https://www.ghi.coop/content/iv-care-ghi-yard>

**#3 Water in Containers that may Breed Mosquitoes:** See [U. Md tips on Controlling Mosquitoes](#).

**#21 Stormwater Drainage or Yard Swales Obstructed:** Questions and requests for clarification should be directed to the GHI Community Beautification Hotline at 301-474-4161, ext. 139.

- - -

For member reference: the CBP enforces the "Minimum Maintenance Standards" in the GHI Member Handbook, starting on page 35. <https://www.ghi.coop/sites/default/files/governing-documents/GHI%20Handbook%20-%20Revised%202018.pdf>