

HOMEOWNER'S ENHANCEMENT GUIDE

Chapter 7: *Making the Most of Your Yard*



## MAINTAINING YOUR YARD

This chapter takes a look at maintaining your yard and plantings and gives you ideas for enhancements to your site. The suggestions relate to the information found in other chapters including Aging in Place and Going Green.

### A SEA OF GREEN

Most mid-century homes are surrounded by lawn and most homeowners find themselves in a cycle of cutting grass, fertilizing and controlling weeds. By following the steps on this page, you can create a healthy lawn, reduce the chemicals needed, and water more efficiently.

You may also want to consider reducing the amount of lawn you have by:

- Increasing planting beds devoted to drought-tolerant native plants
- Constructing raised beds for vegetable gardens
- Planting shade and/or fruit trees
- Using foundation plantings

### FREE SOIL TESTS AND MORE

To learn how to receive a free soil test, enroll in the Henrico SMART Lawns program, and find links to insect and disease identification resources, visit the Henrico County Extension website:

<http://www.henrico.us/extension/>

Lawn Maintenance	Spring/Summer	Fall	Annual	As Needed
Use crabgrass preventer.	mid-March			
Measure lawn to get square footage, test soil, and amend as needed.	mid-spring			
Rake to remove thatch build-up.	mid-spring			
Mow lawn leaving grass 3" high to shade roots and reduce watering need.	●			
Sharpen mower blades after every 10 hours of mowing.				●
Aerate and overseed to help prevent weeds in spring.		●		●
Treat grubs. Predator nematodes are an organic option available by mail order and are very effective.	summer			
Fertilize lawn (only if needed after testing) Use your own compost or an organic product.	●	●		
Treat annual weeds. Try corn gluten for non-toxic pre-emergent weed control.	●	●		
Water deeply. When there is no rain, water 1" inch every 5-7 days early in the morning.				●

## Tree & Shrub Maintenance

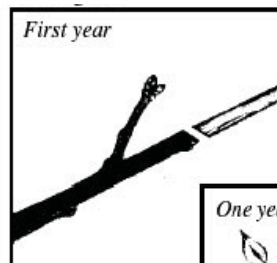
	Spring/Summer	Fall	Annual	As Needed
Trim bushes so that nothing touches house.	●			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prune spring flowering shrubs after they have bloomed.</li> </ul>	●			
Have certified, licensed, insured arborist remove weak, dead, or rotten trees or large branches that may fall on house.	●			
Mulch plants with 2-3" of mulch. Keep mulch away from trunks.	●	●		
Research new plants before purchasing. Make sure they are Zone 7 hardy and healthy.	spring	●		
Inspect plants for disease and provide treatment.	weekly			

### GUIDES TO SUCCESSFUL PRUNING

Follow the path below on Virginia Cooperative Extension website for downloads of this series on pruning:

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/index.html>

Click on: Lawn & Garden  
Then: Trees, Shrubs & Groundcover



This heading diagram is courtesy of the Virginia Cooperative Extension.



### LET THERE BE LIGHT

Remember that plants need light to grow. Don't prune shrubs into a triangle with the widest part at the top or you will get no new growth on the lower branches.

### WHEN TO PRUNE

Prune spring flowering shrubs as soon as they have bloomed. Many of these shrubs set buds for the next year's blooms on new spring growth, so do not wait. Summer and fall flowering shrubs should be pruned in the fall or very early spring before they start to grow. Diseased or dead branches can be removed at any time of the year.

### HOW TO PRUNE

#### Thinning

This pruning method involves cutting the growth down to the ground and should be used for multi-stem shrubs that are too dense. A good rule of thumb is to take out no more than 1/3 of the branches. It is also a good idea to remove some of the older branches each time.

#### Heading

A great technique for helping a shrub to look its best! By cutting a branch back to a healthy bud pointed inward, you can direct new growth to fill in holes inside the shrub. If you cut back to an outward facing bud, the growth will occur in that direction.

#### Shearing

Most useful for evergreens, this technique can help you create a hedge by clipping new growth every spring.



## ENHANCING YOUR YARD

After you've taken care of your existing lawn, plantings, and trees it may be time to think about enhancing your yard.

Two great ways to get ideas are:

- Visit local public gardens such as the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden and Maymont. They have many different types of display gardens and information on the plants in them.
- Drive through your neighborhood and other neighborhoods that have houses similar to yours in size and scale. Note what you like.



This view of the Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens shows a mass planting of spring bulbs in front of the conservatory.

### LEWIS GINTER BOTANICAL GARDEN

Located in Henrico County, the 80-acre Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden was founded in 1981. The themed gardens include a healing garden, a rose garden, a sunken garden, an Asian valley, a wetland garden, a Victorian garden, a perennial garden, conifer garden and a children's garden.

[www.lewisginter.org](http://www.lewisginter.org)

### MAYMONT HOUSE AND GARDENS

Established in 1886, this 100-acre park includes an Italian garden, a Japanese garden, an arboretum, a butterfly trail, a cactus garden, a walled garden with bulbs, annuals and perennials, an herb garden, a Virginia native landscape, a daylily and daffodil garden and a vegetable garden.

[www.maymont.org](http://www.maymont.org)



## WHAT'S IN YOUR GARDEN?



A playset can be a welcome addition to the backyard but be sure to provide some shade.



A pervious pavement patio can expand your outdoor entertaining area and reduce water runoff.



Raised beds and vertical trellises can increase the yield of your garden without increasing its size.

Once you've driven through neighborhoods, visited public gardens, and looked through magazines and books, it's time to figure out what it is that you really want from your garden.

### FRONT YARD GARDENS

These public spaces provide a chance for you to enhance the “curb appeal” of your home. The plantings should frame the view of the house from the street, reflect the style of the house, and the arrangement of doors and windows. Common front yard elements include: walkways, foundation plantings, trees, lawn, groundcover, and lighting.

### BACK YARD GARDENS

The space behind your house is your private outdoor space and should function for the way you use that space. Just like the inside of your house, your outdoor space can be divided into areas for each use.

If you are thinking about a backyard improvement project you should probably consider how you use, or would like to use, this outdoor space for:

- Kids
- Pets
- Exercise
- Entertaining
- Gardening

Common backyard elements include: trees, shrubs, lawn, groundcover, play areas, work areas, areas for relaxing and entertaining, lighting, patios and decks, fences or hedges, vegetable gardens, water features, compost piles, sheds, and arbors or trellises.



## BEFORE YOU GO ANY FURTHER...

### CONSIDER THESE GARDEN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

These design principles can help you simplify the process of designing a new space in your yard and help you to integrate it into your existing plantings.

**Balance.** A formal or symmetrical planting arrangement means that there is a balanced arrangement of plants of equal size and shape on each side of the yard.

An informal or asymmetrical arrangement allows more freedom in design, as the plantings do not need to be alike on both sides.

**Repetition.** Repeat plants with similar shapes, colors, textures, and scent throughout the garden.

**Proportion.** Use plants that are of an appropriate scale for your house and yard. Consider the mature size of the plant, not the size when you plant it.

**Transition.** Design the garden so that there are no abrupt changes in color, height, or texture.

**Variety.** Keep it simple when it comes to the number of elements and colors to provide a sense of harmony to the garden.

**Sequence.** Repeat colors, forms and lines to create visual interest.

**Emphasis.** Use focal points such as a trellis, arbor, fountain, bench, or special plant to provide direction.



The symmetrical facade of this bungalow lends itself to a balanced arrangement of trees and shrubs.



The asymmetrical facade of this split level often looks best when a more informal planting style is used.



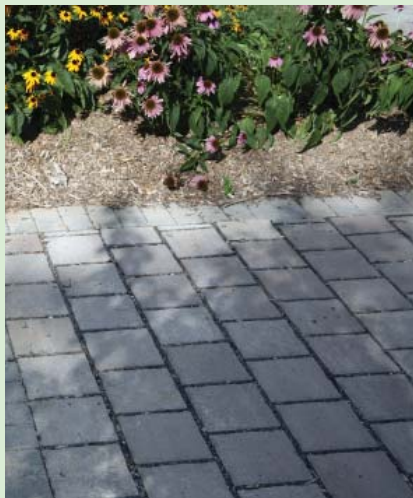
## IN THE YARD - GREEN, GREEN, AND GREENER STILL

### PLANTINGS



- Plant deciduous trees and shrubs on the south side of the house to shade the house in summer and allow the sun to warm the house in winter.
- Plant evergreen trees on the north and northwest to block winter winds.
- Shade your air-conditioning unit by planting a large shrub or small tree 3 - 4 feet away to block the afternoon sun.
- Using drought-tolerant plants and grass reduces the need for watering.

### PAVING



- Limit the amount of paved area. Shade any paved surfaces to reduce heat gain.
- Use permeable paving techniques rather than hard mortar and concrete or asphalt so water can pass through and pollutants are filtered. Options include stone, brick, porous aggregates, open-jointed blocks, pervious concrete and porous asphalt.

### LIGHTS



- Use a programmable timer or motion sensor for outdoor lights.
- Upgrade outdoor light fixtures to energy efficient models or solar-powered lights.



## CONSIDER THESE GREEN IDEAS

### GOOD BUGS CAN HELP LIMIT CHEMICAL USAGE

- Beneficial insects and plants can reduce the need for chemicals and help reduce run-off that pollutes nearby rivers and streams.
- Ladybugs eat aphids. Plant nectar-producing plants such as daisies and alyssum and herbs such as mint and dill to attract ladybugs.
- Sage deters cabbage moths and flea beetles.
- Garlic is a natural pest repellent.
- Plant companion plants to keep harmful insects at bay. Your local garden center can help you match plants.
- Bats provide natural pest control. Attract them by adding a bat house, a water feature, and by planting night-blooming native flowering plants such as evening primrose, nicotiana, and cleome.
- Encourage worms in your soil by avoiding harsh chemicals, occasional deep watering, and providing good organic material such as compost.
- Use a hose to remove aphids, leafhoppers and spider mites from plants.
- Water in the morning to reduce growth of powdery mildew and other diseases that thrive in humid conditions.
- Diatomaceous earth, an organic white powder, is non-toxic to humans and pets and harmful to insects such as fleas, ticks, pillbugs, slugs, and snails.



### GO NATIVE!

Consider using plants native to Virginia.

### BENEFITS

- Reduces the need to water or fertilize once the plants are established.
- Resists most pests and diseases so no chemicals are needed.
- Attracts wildlife by providing food and shelter.

### VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

The Virginia Native Plant Society encourages the use of native plants. Native plant lists for Henrico County, which falls between the Coastal Plain and Piedmont regions, can be found on their website.

Brochures available for download include:

“Meet the Natives: A Guide for Growing and Using Native Plants”

“Do I Have to Mow All That: A Guide to Reducing Lawn, Attracting Birds and Butterflies and More”

[www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org)

### NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Create a Healthy Back Yard through reducing the need for pesticides, using native plants, providing a habitat for birds, and composting your yard and kitchen waste.

[www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)







A rain barrel collects water from a downspout for use in the garden.



Native plants, water, and food can help attract wildlife to your backyard.

## GOING GREEN IN THE GARDEN

**Use a rain barrel.** By collecting rainwater from your roof, you can reduce the costs to water your lawn and garden and reduce runoff.

**Use mulch.** Wood mulch will hold in moisture around trees and plants.

**Water early.** By avoiding the hottest part of the day you will reduce waste through evaporation.

**Establish a compost pile or bin.** It reduces waste in the landfill and can be used to fertilize your plants for free. Pick a level, shaded, well-drained area away from trees.

**Start a home garden.** What you grow yourself reduces what you need to buy at the store, saves you money, provides fresh healthy vegetables and fruits, and reduces energy used in transportation.



### ESTABLISH A COMPOST PILE

Recycle yard waste and kitchen scraps into fertilizer for your lawn and garden. Visit the Virginia Cooperative Extension website to get started @

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-703/426-703.html#L1>

### MAKE A RAIN BARREL

Click on the link below for a material list, necessary tools and instructions.

<http://www.epa.gov/Region3/p2/make-rainbarrel.pdf>

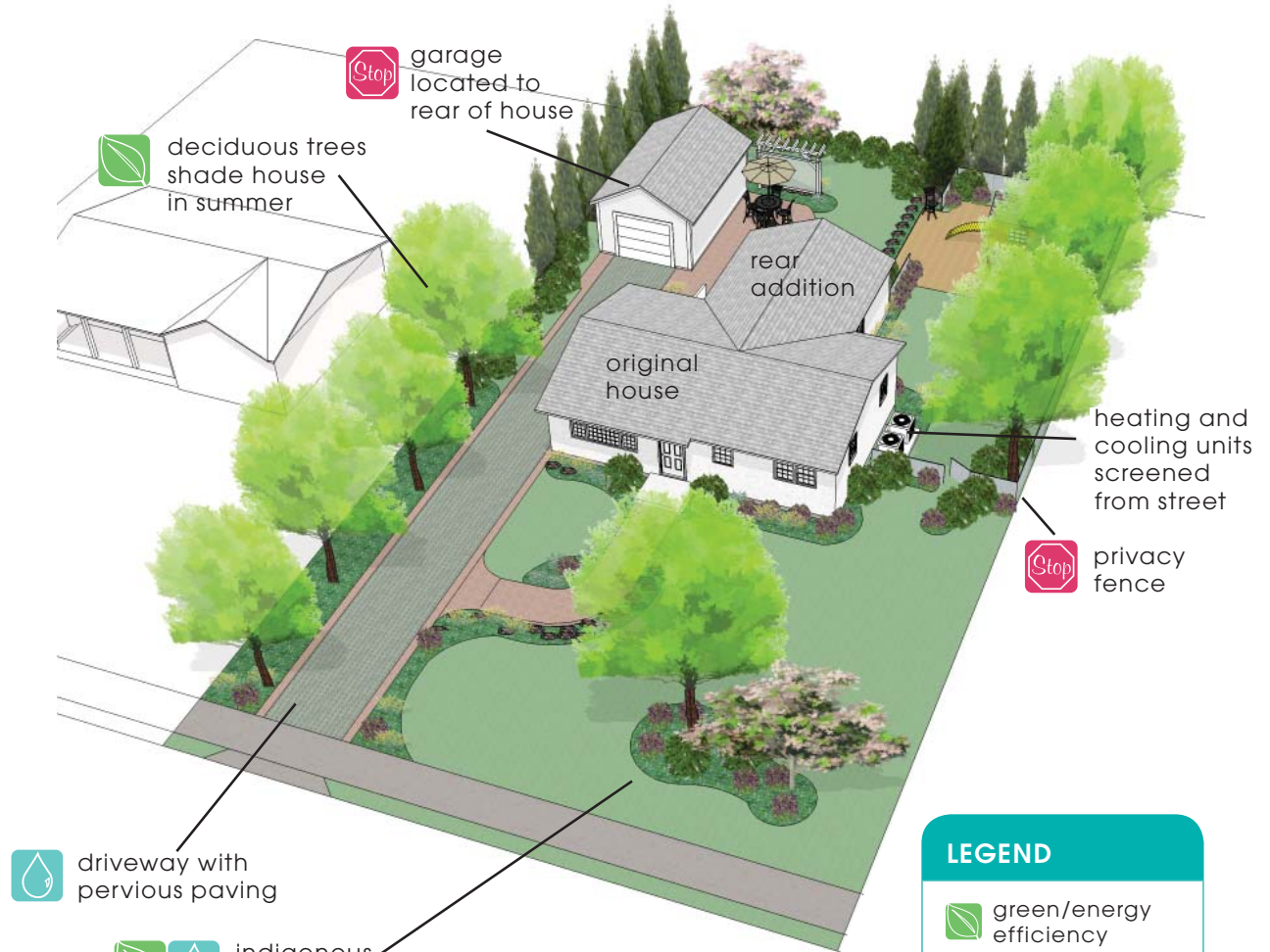


## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR RANCH YARD



These illustrations of the site of a simple ranch style house as seen in many Henrico County neighborhoods show a number of improvements:

- plantings in the front yard accentuate the style of the house and are native plants that require less water and maintenance
- trees at the side lot line provide screening of the driveway from the neighbors view
- permeable pavement driveway that prevents runoff
- garage located to the rear of the lot contributes the sense of enclosure of an outdoor eating area
- paved surfaces provide access to the handicap ramp located along the new addition
- outdoor dining is screened for privacy by an arbor
- evergreen trees at the rear lot line provide a windbreak and year-around backdrop








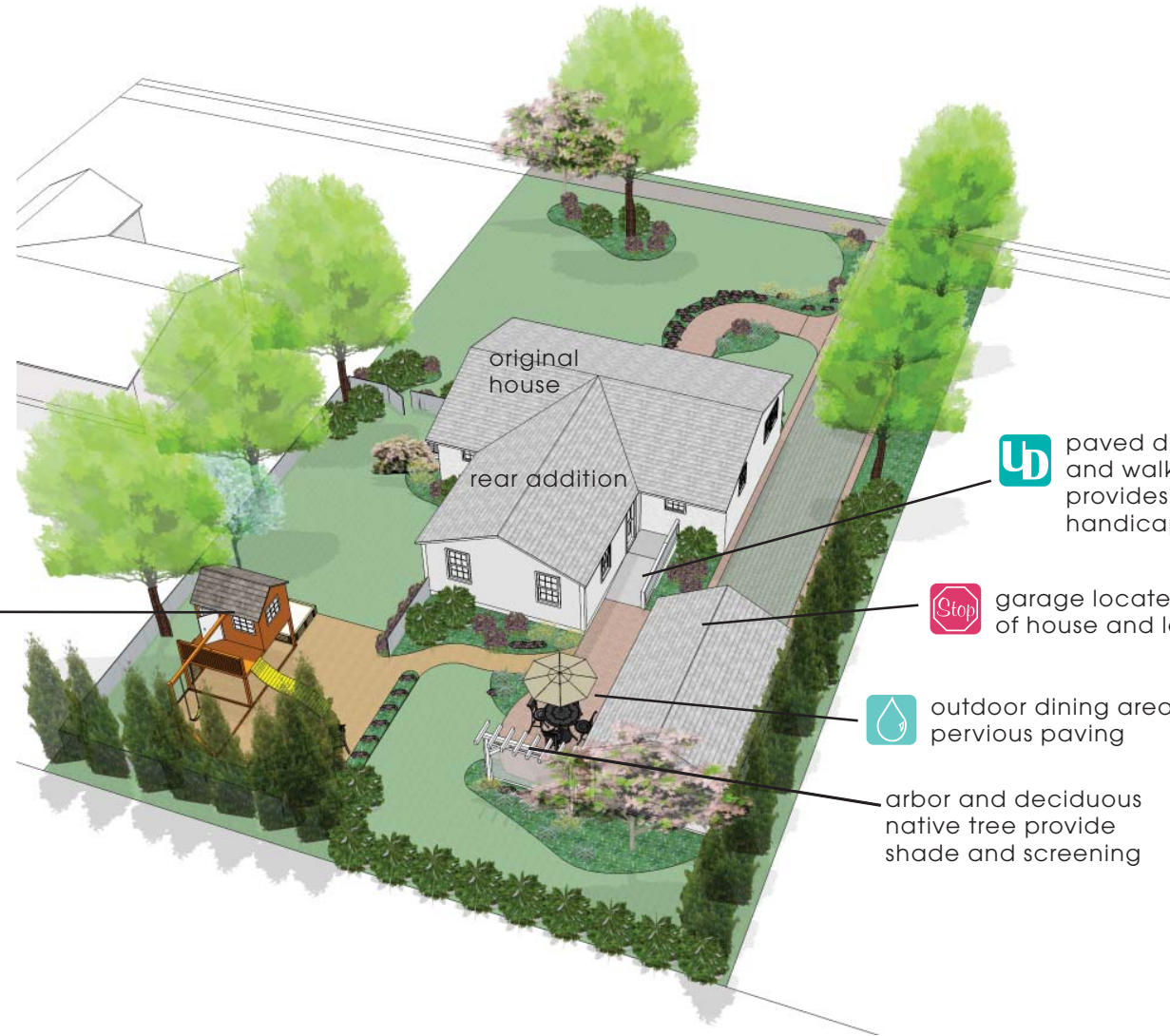
**LEGEND**



- green/energy efficiency
- water efficiency
- reduce/reuse/recycle
- Universal Design
- Check with Permit Center





LEGEND


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  shaded playhouse and swingset

 paved driveway and walkway provides access to handicap ramp

 garage located to rear of house and lot

 outdoor dining area with pervious paving

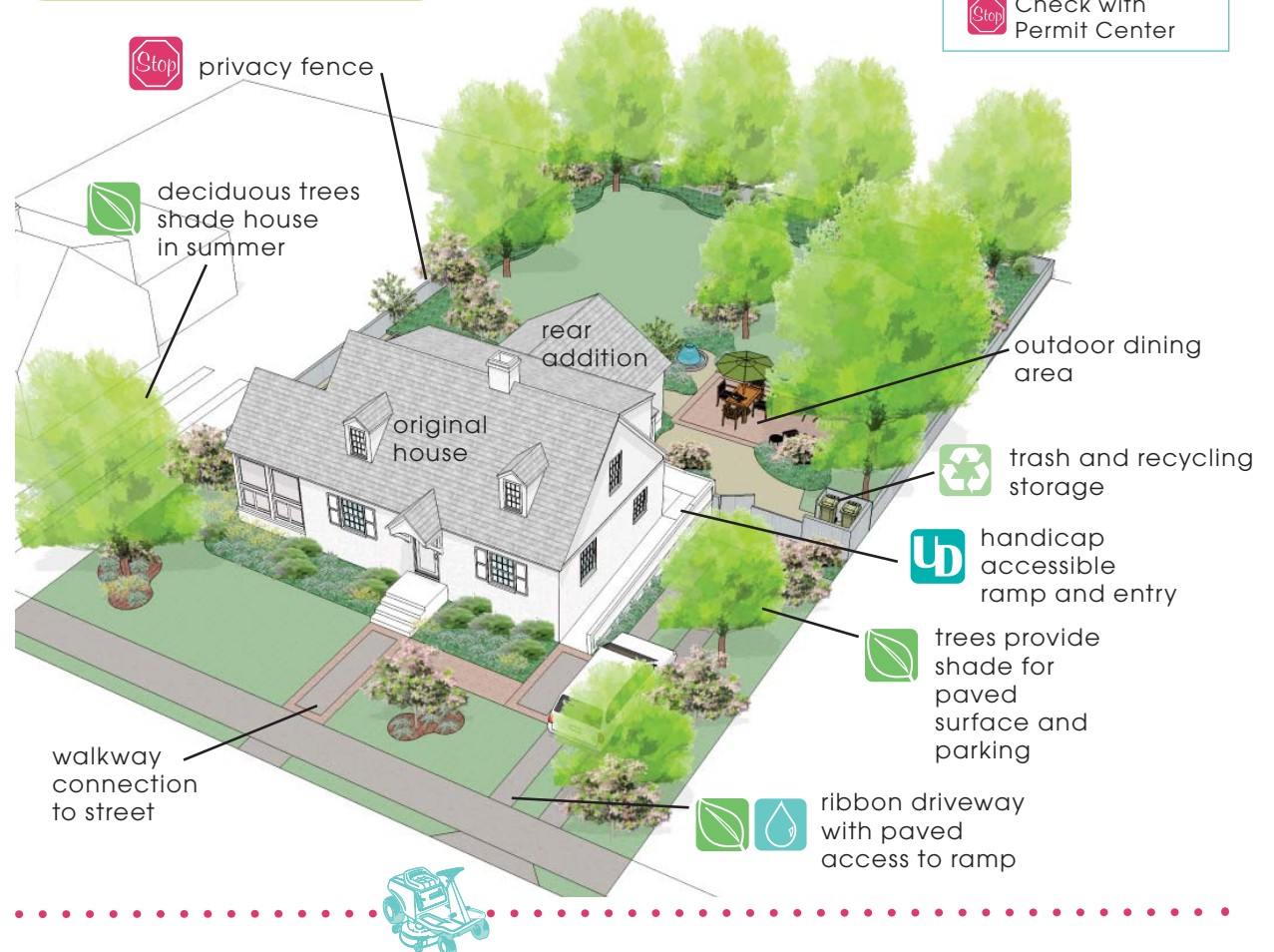
arbor and deciduous native tree provide shade and screening






## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR CAPE COD YARD

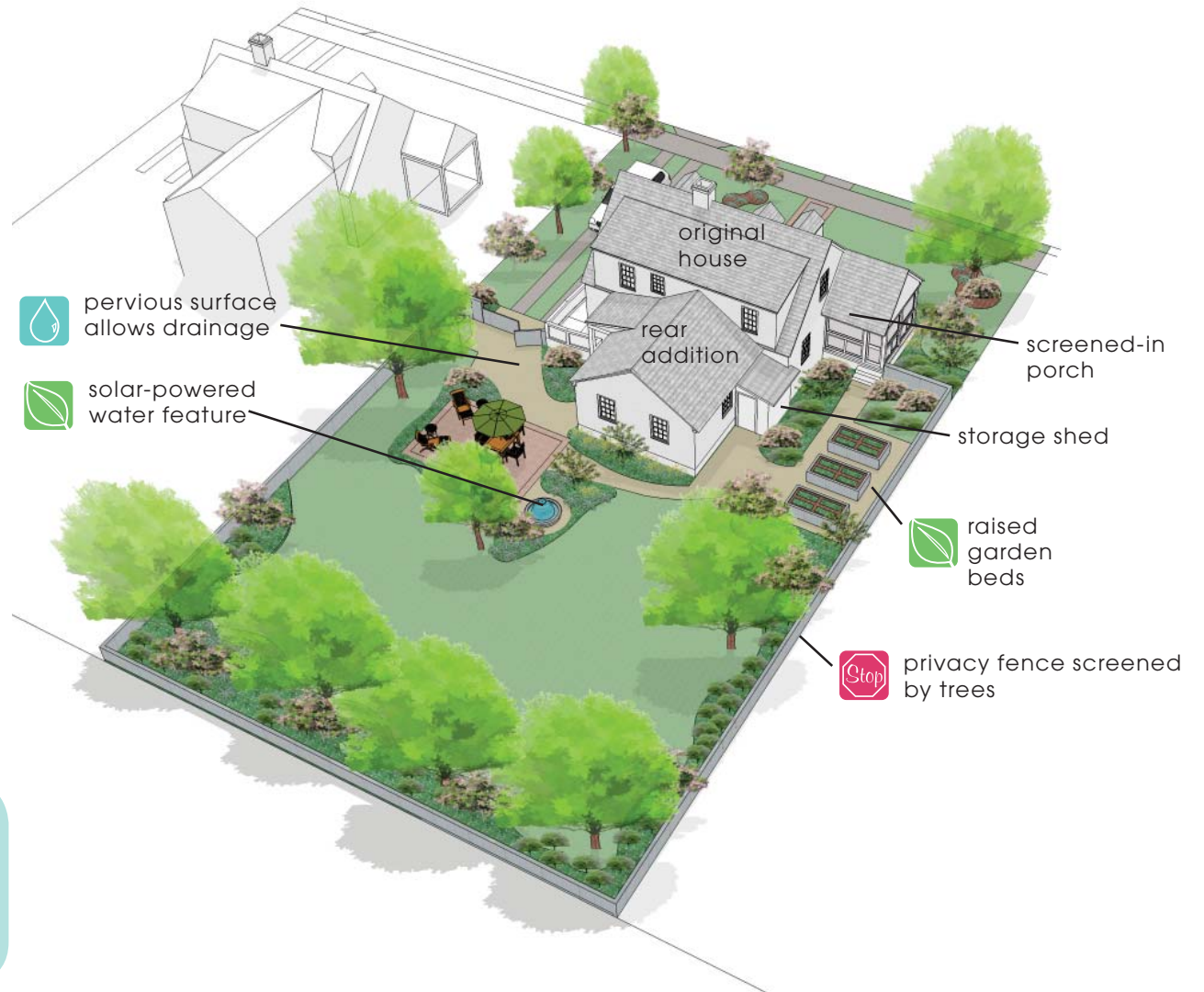
The Cape Cod house style is one of the most enduring and traditional small house designs in the United States. This illustration uses a variation of the house style found in some Henrico County neighborhoods that incorporates a side porch. Possible site improvements include:

- front walkway that connects to the sidewalk
- permeable pavement ribbon driveway which requires less paving than a traditional driveway
- trees located to provide shade for parked cars
- handicap access to a side entry with connecting pavement from the driveway
- screened trash and recycling storage
- privacy fence in the backyard softened by deciduous trees
- storage shed attached to a blank wall on the side of the house
- a water feature that can be run by a solar powered pump to avoid electrical connections
- outdoor dining area
- raised vegetable garden beds for accessible gardening
- transition areas covered in crushed stone or stepping stones for drainage and reduced heat gain



LEGEND

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-  water efficiency
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For more information on solar-powered water features visit :

[www.solarwaterfountains.org](http://www.solarwaterfountains.org)



## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR SPLIT LEVEL YARD

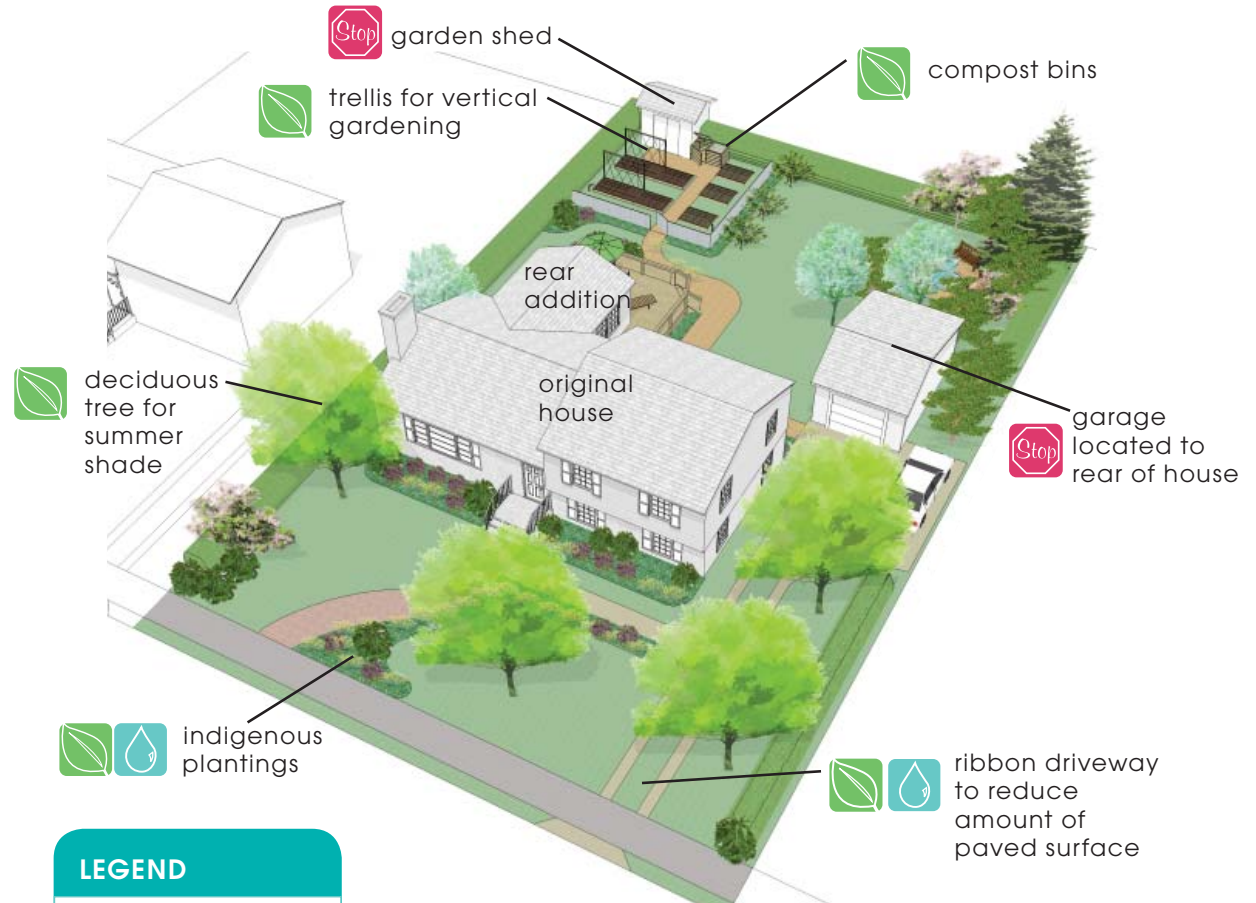


The Split Level house was originally built for growing families. These houses were often built on larger lots than the earlier small ranches, bungalows and Cape Cods. These enlarged lots give homeowners more options for enhancements such as:






- large deck for entertaining
- garden plot and shed for vegetable gardening
- compost bins
- natural habitat to attract wildlife
- garage
- rainbarrels
- evergreen hedge to provide privacy and screening

Note that many of these outdoor features and the house are shaded and that the site is planted with native or indigenous plantings to reduce the need for watering.

Where pavement is illustrated, it should be permeable to reduce runoff.



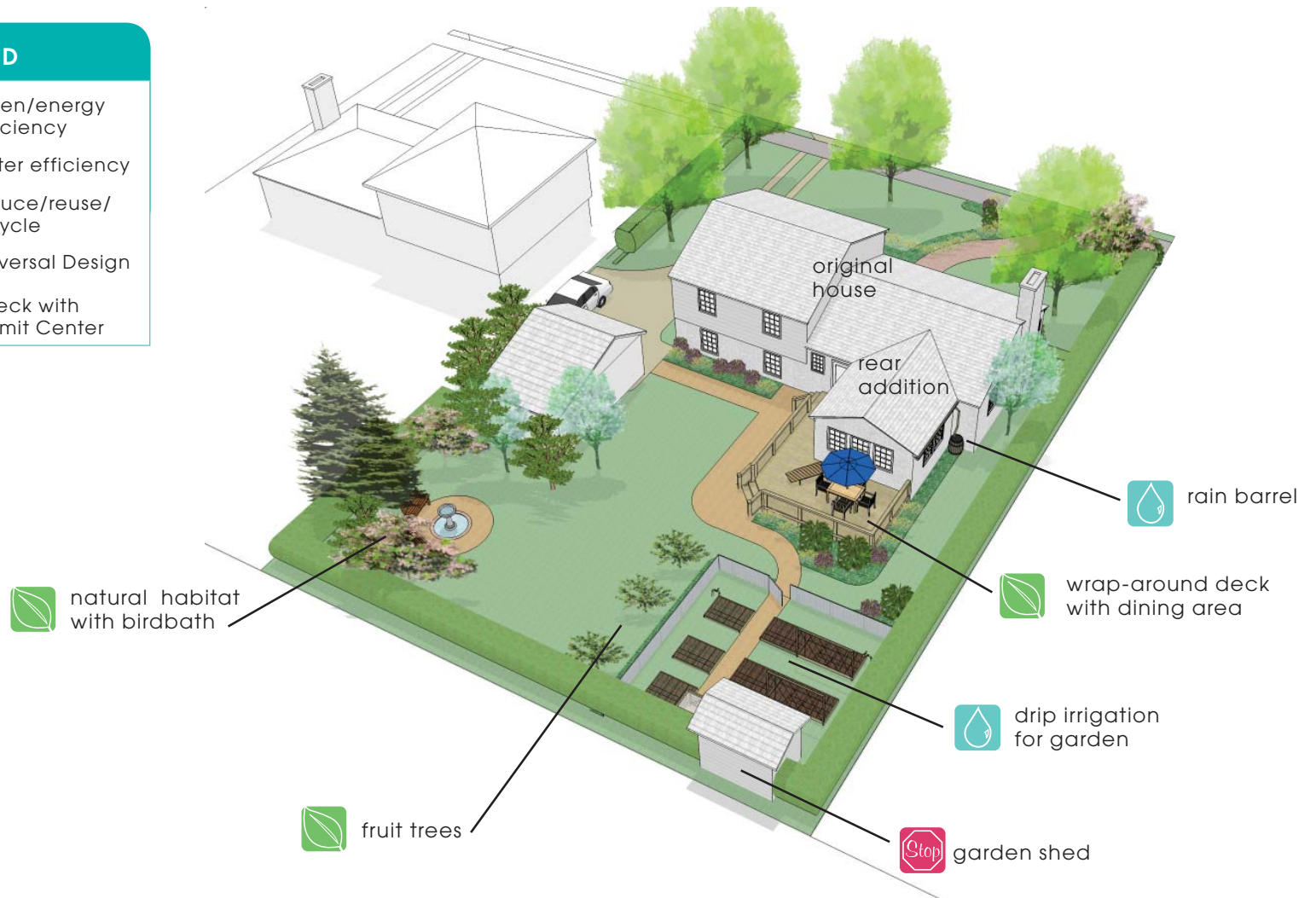
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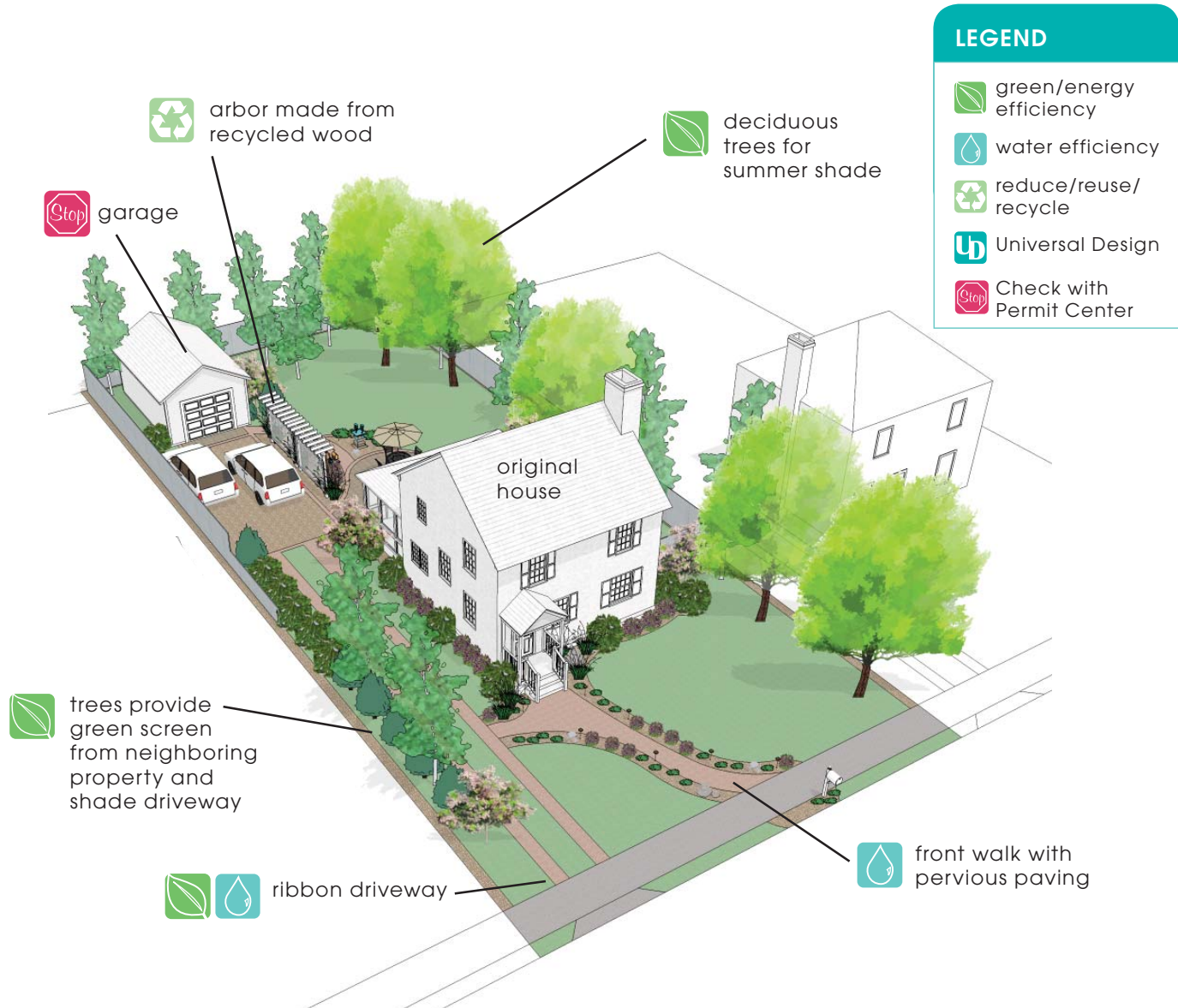


## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR COLONIAL REVIVAL YARD




One of the country's most enduring house styles, the brick Colonial Revival house is especially identified with Virginia. These houses often look best when traditional plantings are used to accent the classic architecture. Additional traditional elements may include:

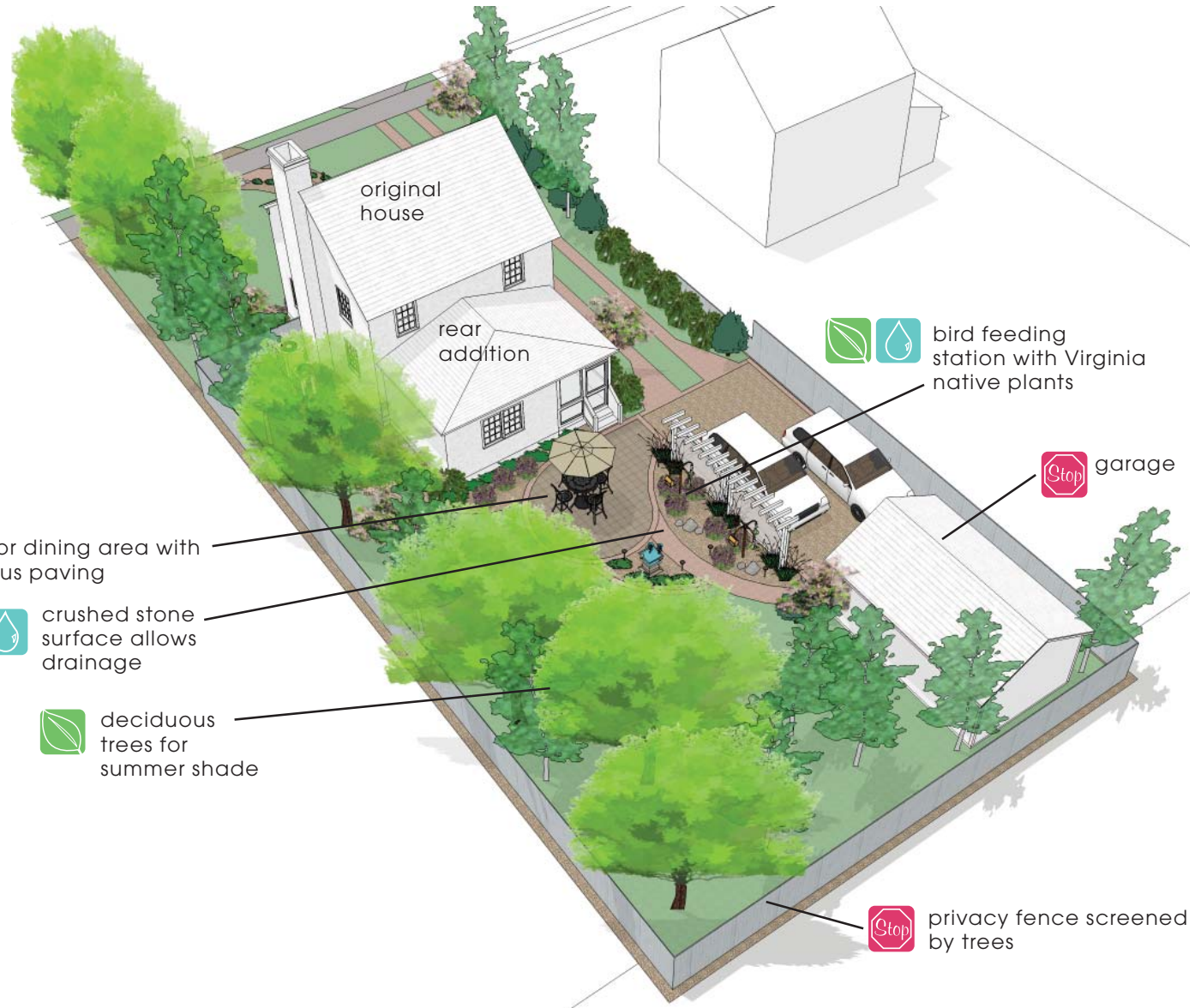
- brick walkway
- ribbon driveway
- evergreen plantings
- Virginia native plants
- shrubs and trees used for energy efficiency and screening
- structural elements including a garage and/or arbor
- outdoor dining/entertaining area
- bird-feeding station








LEGEND

-  green/energy efficiency
-  water efficiency
-  reduce/reuse/recycle
-  Universal Design
-  Check with Permit Center



 outdoor dining area with pervious paving

 crushed stone surface allows drainage

 deciduous trees for summer shade

  bird feeding station with Virginia native plants

 garage

 privacy fence screened by trees



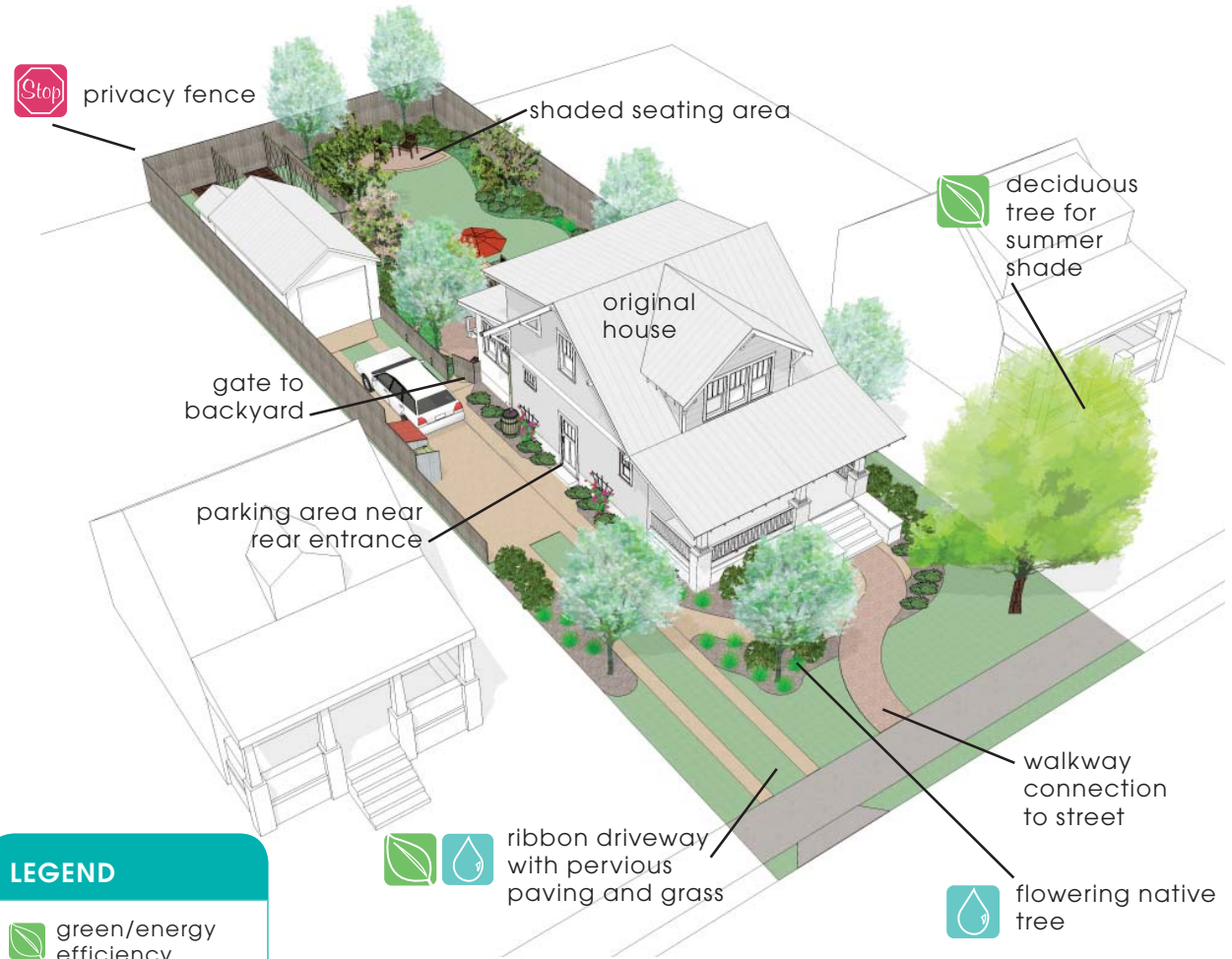
## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR BUNGALOW YARD



As found in Henrico County, small Bungalow style houses are often located in neighborhoods that were on streetcar lines which provided transportation in the days before everyone owned a car. Small lots allowed many houses to be built within walking distance to streetcar stops. Today, these small houses on small lots may provide challenges for the homeowner wishing to expand their living space outdoors and needing to park multiple vehicles.

These illustrations show some possible ways to address these challenges:

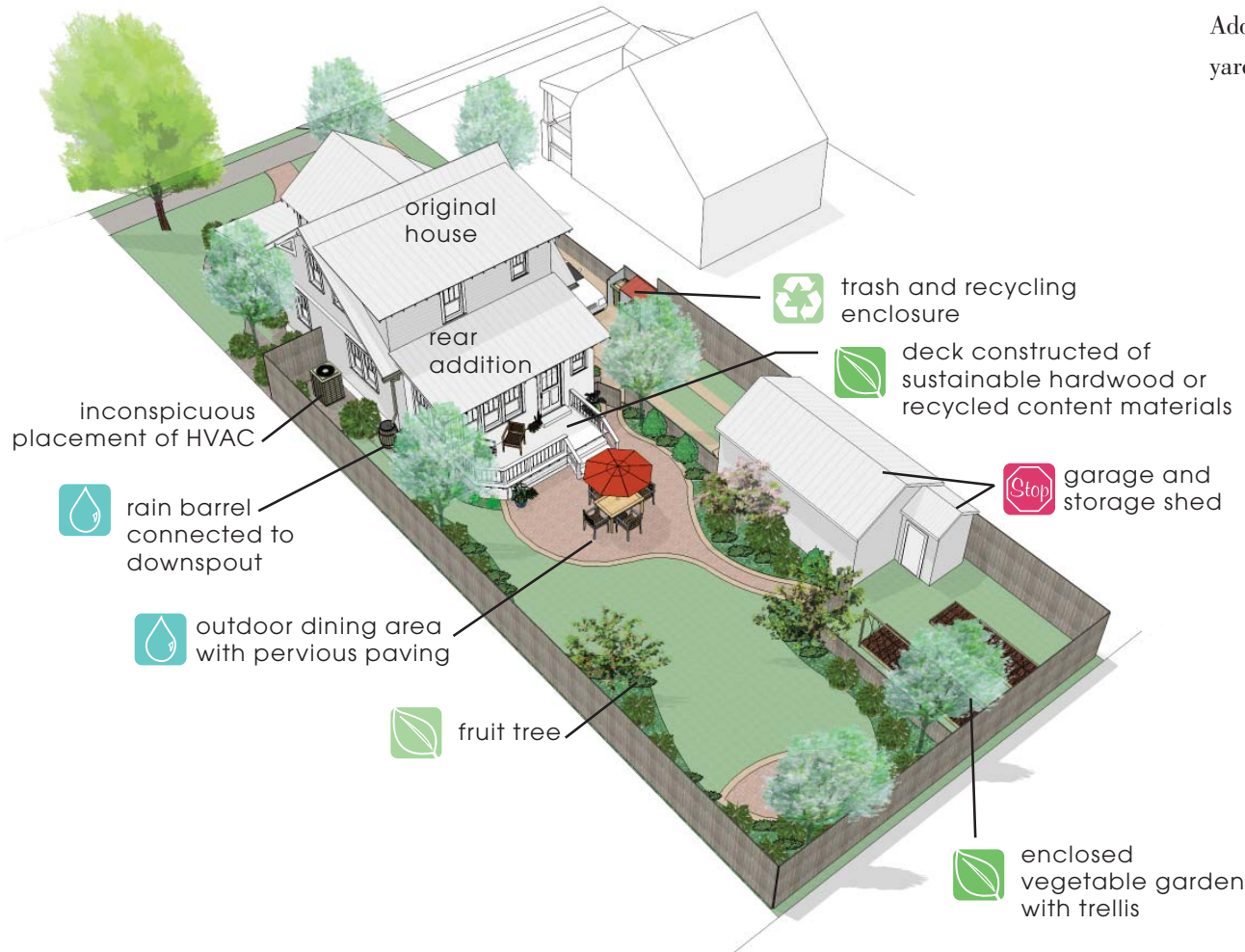
- ribbon driveway with permeable paved parking pad for two single-loaded cars
- possible single-car garage with attached garden shed
- vegetable garden with trellises for vertical gardening
- outdoor seating areas
- deck with dining area



**LEGEND**

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Additional items to enhance Bungalow yards include:

- rain barrels to capture rainwater for watering the garden and other plantings
- walkways to connect the front yard to the driveway and to the sidewalk or street
- native plantings to reduce water usage
- trees planted to provide shade for house and outdoor areas

**LEGEND**

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-  water efficiency
-  reduce/reuse/recycle
-  Universal Design
-  Check with Permit Center

