



The Commercial Inspector

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A Monthly Newsletter From National Property Inspections

ask the inspector

Q. How can I maximize the efficiency of the landscaping on my commercial property?

A. The purpose of the exterior of any building is to protect the interior of the building, and exteriors are designed to shed water and prevent leaks. The ground around a building, including its parking areas, is sloped and graded to facilitate the movement of water away from the building into storm sewers, drains or retention ponds. This prevents water from pooling against the building and possibly penetrating the foundation.



The quandary for many business owners is how to also make the resulting landscaping aesthetically pleasing for customers, associates and other visitors. Business owners must determine a landscaping plan that is pleasing to the eye but doesn't become a budget drain.

A bit of planning can allow you to reduce

snapshots from the field

Does the landscaping in this photo serve a purpose other than enhancing the property?



- A) No, it is just there to enhance the property.
- B) Yes, it serves as a buffer between the sidewalk and the grass.
- C) Yes, it serves as a bioretention garden, slowing and filtering water runoff.
- D) Both B and C.

(answer on the back)

water consumption for your commercial landscaping and take advantage of the runoff from the building and parking areas. Some things to consider include the following:



- » Installing soaker hoses and trickle irrigation systems close to plants. These put water close to the roots of plants and shrubs, requiring less water because of less evaporation.

- » Repair irrigation system leaks.
- » Water only during the coolest part of the day, and pay attention to area drought restrictions.
- » Use native plants and grasses, and reduce turf areas that require lots of water or fertilizer.
- » Let your grass grow longer. Raising the height on the mower allows the longer grass blades to shade each other, cuts down water evaporation and inhibits weed growth.
- » Be smart about water features, such as fountains. Install systems that use recycled water and turn off the fountains if a drought persists.



maintenance matters

Preventive Maintenance for Your Generator

Keeping the moving parts in your generator in good condition is very important. As the parts remain motionless when the generator is no in use air can creep into a unit injector solenoid. This is especially true in new generators. To prevent this from occurring, emergency generators should be started up every week for about five minutes, and you should conduct transfer load testing every month. You will also want to complete a full load test annually.



In addition, you should make sure the block heater is plugged in an warm, and

you should perform the following general maintenance inspections and repairs on your generator:

» **Weekly**

- Check antifreeze levels
- Inspect for wet spots around the fittings of the fuel system
- Ensure that the indicator light reads OK on the battery charger
- Make sure that the engine and belts are free of wear and any leaks
- Check the engine air filter once every 100 hours of operation

» **Monthly**

- Inspect radiator fins
- Ensure that the connections on the battery and charging systems are tight and corrosion-free

» **Annually**

- Change fuel filters annually
- Check oil levels and change oil and oil filters
- Change the engine filter

did you know?

The Top 10 Building Hazards

1. **Mold.** Prevent water intrusion and excessive humidity.
2. **Pesticides.** [Integrated pest management](#) (IPM) allows you to control and eliminated pests in a safe way.
3. **Fragrances.** Cleaning products should be fragrance-free.
4. **Cleaning supplies.** Choose cleaning supplies with no added chemicals.
5. **Remodeling.** Paints, floor finishes, and carpet all may contain toxic chemicals.
6. **Dust.** You can reduce dust in your building with allergen-type air filters.
7. **Natural gas.** Choose electric options whenever possible.
8. **Wiring.** Be sure your building is properly wired.
9. **Mystery toxins.** Make sure that all HVAC ducts and returns are clean and of the appropriate size.
10. **Stress.** Reduce workers' stress and promote their health and well-being by adding windows to maximize access to natural daylight.

Source: [Healthy Living Spaces: Top 10 Hazards Affecting Your Health](#) by Dan Stih, copyright 2008, Healthy Living Spaces LLC.

Snapshots from the field

The correct answer is D. The landscaping pictured serves two purposes: It dissuades people from walking on the grass and it treats and infiltrates storm water, serving as a bioretention garden.