

Habitat Improvement Initiative Assessment Form

Sweet Grass Award Level:

Address: _____

Property Owner: _____

Date of Evaluation: _____

Evaluated By: _____

Buffer Strips and Screening - 60% - Total Pts _____

Not only do buffer strips provide a means for privacy from adjacent lots or roads, but they also can provide wonderful wildlife habitat. As far as wildlife is concerned, the more buffers, the better! Also, buffer strips need to be dense and provide cover all the way down to ground level – this ensures that wildlife has ample cover to nest or rest.

- What percentage of the home is obscured from the road way when standing at the center of the driveway?
 - < 50% = 0
 - > 50% = 2

- How many of the lot edges have a vegetated buffer strip (> 10 feet wide)?
 - 0 buffers = 0
 - 1 buffer = 1
 - 2 buffers = 2
 - 3 buffers = 3
 - 4 buffers = 4

- Of the buffer strips, how many would prove difficult to walk through?
 - 0 difficult to walk through = 0
 - 1 difficult to walk through = 1
 - 2 difficult to walk through = 2
 - 3 difficult to walk through = 3
 - 4 difficult to walk through = 4

- How many of the buffer strips have a predominantly (> 50%) natural area (NOT laid pine straw/wood chips, etc) underneath the shrub layer?
 - 0 = 0
 - 1 = 1
 - 2 = 2
 - 3 = 3
 - 4 = 4

Section Total: _____

14-13=60pts,12=54pts,11=48pts, 10=42pts, 9=36pts,8=30pts,7=24pts,6=18pts,5=12pts,4-1=6pts,0=0 pts

Main Yard - 40% - Total Pts _____

Again, Kiawah wildlife need cover for resting, nesting and movement. Yards with minimal sod area (and other open space) are best for wildlife. The plants used in the landscape not only provide cover, but also can provide food sources which are very important to the hundreds of bird species on the Island. Heavily shaped shrubs do not benefit wildlife as much as lightly maintained or naturally shaped shrubs – this is because their rigid styling often impedes movement.

- What percentage of the yard is covered by maintained sod, mulch, or laid pine straw?
 - >50% = 0
 - <50% = 2

- How are the shrubs in the yard pruned?
 - Heavily shaped and maintained = 0
 - Irregular shape and lightly maintained = 1
 - Very natural shape with little to no pruning =3

- Is there an unnatural area (laid pine straw/mulch/maintained sod) under the shrub layer in the main yard?
 - Yes, under most of the shrub areas, >50% = 0
 - Not Really, very little maintenance under planted areas ,<50% = 2

Section Total: _____

7=40pts, 6=34pts, 5=28pts, 4=22pts, 3=16pts, 2=10pts, 1=4pts, 0=0 pts

Bonus Points - Total Points _____

- Are there any dead snags, hollow stumps, nest boxes, or other unique nesting/denning cover?
Snags (standing dead trees) and nest boxes provide great nesting spots for birds and provide woodpeckers a good place to call home (instead of your home's siding!). Hollow stumps also provide good nesting areas for birds, but can also be used as dens for mammals – even bobcats.
 - No = 0
 - Yes = 5
 - **LIST:**

- Does the property have NWF Backyard Habitat Certification?
 - No = 0
 - Yes = 5

- Does the property provide a freshwater source for wildlife (birdbath, ornamental pond, etc)?
Having a readily available source of freshwater for birds is very important!
 - No = 0
 - Yes = 5
 - **LIST:**

Deductions - **Total Points**_____

- Are any of these 6 aggressive invasive plant species present in the main yard or buffer strip?
Aggressive invasives (that often provide little benefit to Kiawah’s wildlife) can become difficult to control and over time can crowd out native plant species. By using native plants in your landscape, you will be providing better habitat to wildlife and saving money on maintenance (since these plants have evolved to get the most out of Kiawah’s growing conditions). Try to avoid these aggressive invasive plant species!
 - Tallow Tree (*Triadica sebifera*)
 - Beach Vitex (*Vitex rotundifolia*)
 - Mimosa/Silk Tree (*Albizia julibrissin*)
 - Kudzu (*Pueraria lobata*)
 - Chinese Wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*)
 - Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*)
 - Thorny Olive (*Elaeagnus pungens*)
- Yes = -10
- If yes, but there is an eradication plan in effect or if an eradication plan is created and implemented then there is no loss of points.
- Are KICA/ARB vegetation management guidelines being followed?
 - Are the buffer zones along pond edges at least 3 feet in width?
 - No = -5
 - Are the buffer zones along marsh edges at least 15 feet in width?
 - No = -5
- Does the property have a “traditional” pesticide based mosquito misting system?
 - Yes = Disqualified

* Properties violating KICA/ARB landscaping guidelines are subject to disqualification at the discretion of the appropriate entity.

POINT TALLY (Insert Section Totals)

Buffer Strip: _____

Main Yard: _____

Bonus: _____

Deductions: _____

TOTAL: _____

Gold = \geq 80 points

Silver = 60-79 points

Bronze = 40-59 points

Additional Comments: