

Grow Zones



The City of Gahanna parks and open spaces are going back to nature with the creation of Grow Zones through the city park and open space system. Grow Zones are designated areas where crews stop mowing and allow nature to return.

What is a 'Grow Zone'?

Grow Zone areas help promote the natural regeneration of the urban forest. By allowing these areas to remain undisturbed we allow a greater variety of native vegetation to re-establish itself, including both overstory plants (the uppermost layer of foliage that forms a forest canopy) and understory plants (the underlying layer of vegetation, especially the plants that grow beneath a forest's canopy).

Where are these Grow Zones located?

There are several Grow Zones in the City of Gahanna. These areas have been planned and intentionally placed. Grass and other plants will grow tall the first year but be assured these areas have not been forgotten by our staff. Soon, trees will sprout, grow and expand our forested areas.

The busiest areas of the parks are still mowed on a regular basis so that visitors to the parks can enjoy the playgrounds, shelters, fields and other high-use areas. Mowing is done in a regular rotation.

There are many areas considered Grow Zones including Friendship Park, Woodside Green Park, as well as area recreational trails and stream corridors.

When did Grow Zones start?

The concept of allocating areas to nature is not a new one. For years, there have been areas in the City of Gahanna parks and open spaces that were left natural. Grow Zones save money in staff time and equipment, and add to the natural beauty of the parks. In addition, mowing uses energy and emits excess CO₂ into the air. Maintaining the mowed areas requires the use of fertilizers and insect killer, which also adds to the harmful effects. Mowing destroys habitat for wildlife, and does nothing to attract birds, butterflies and fireflies.

How will Grow Zones areas develop over time?

These areas will go through a natural process called “ecological succession”. In this process, so called “pioneer plants” establish first. Over time, they are replaced by larger trees that form a shady, open canopy. Sometimes these areas may look brushy or scrubby, but please help us give nature a hand by being patient. Ecological succession can take years to complete but it will help our environment and help to improve water quality and the health of our City’s streams by filtering pollutants and reducing erosion.

Signage for the Grow Zones:

Signs are being erected to mark Grow Zones and to inform residents about the project. The signs say *Habitat Restoration for Future Generations*. Residents are asked to be patient, as the transition back to nature takes time. These areas that look overgrown will eventually transform and add to the beauty of the city’s parks and open spaces. Visitors to the parks are welcome to investigate the Grow Zones; there are no restrictions on walking or exploring these natural areas.

Caretakers of our Environment:

We all love the wildlife of Gahanna, but development has encroached on the natural habitat of wildlife. Targeting areas that are not heavily used in parks creates more natural areas in which wild animals and native plants can find shelter, and perhaps allow a more peaceful coexistence with the visitors to their home. For many people, especially children, viewing wildlife in the backyard is exciting. People and wildlife can peacefully coexist in most situations. However, there may be times when conflicts arise. More information on dealing with uninvited house guests is available from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (<http://wildlife.ohiodnr.gov/species-and-habitats/nuisance-wildlife>).

Efficiencies:

As part of the careful scrutiny of the budget and the ongoing search for efficiencies, the City of Gahanna mowing services are being reviewed constantly. The City of Gahanna continues to look for cost-saving measures that make good sense – like the establishment of grow zones. It conserves resources: money, staff time, equipment, natural habitat and helps to cleanse our water.

Your Feedback:

We are asking for patience as the grow zones develop naturally. Since residents are more familiar with the parks and the natural areas than our visitors, they are the best ones to explain the grow zone concept to our visitors.

For more information, contact:

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