

The Catalyst

Activating TN's Sustainable and Resilient Future

Office of Sustainable Practices



News Articles:

[Nominations for Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards Due March 14th](#)

[TDEC Accepting Grant Applications for Waste Tire Reuse Through April 15th](#)

[Tennessee State Parks Have \\$1.9 Billion Impact on State Economy](#)



TENNESSEE SMART YARDS

Tennessee Smart Yards

Spring is the perfect time to start working on your yard and exploring how you can improve both its appearance and its impact on the environment. [Tennessee Smart Yards](#) is a UT-TSU Extension-led program that guides Tennesseans on practices they can apply in their outdoor spaces to create healthier, more ecologically-sound landscapes and communities. You don't have to be an expert gardener or landscaper to create a Tennessee Smart Yard. All it takes is a willingness to learn and a desire to take action. There are nine principles of stewardship that serve as the foundation for the program:

1. Right Plant, Right Place
2. Manage Soils and Mulch
3. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
4. Water Efficiently
5. Use Fertilizer Appropriately
6. Manage Yard Pests
7. Reduce Stormwater Runoff and its Pollutants
8. Provide for Wildlife
9. Protect Water's Edge

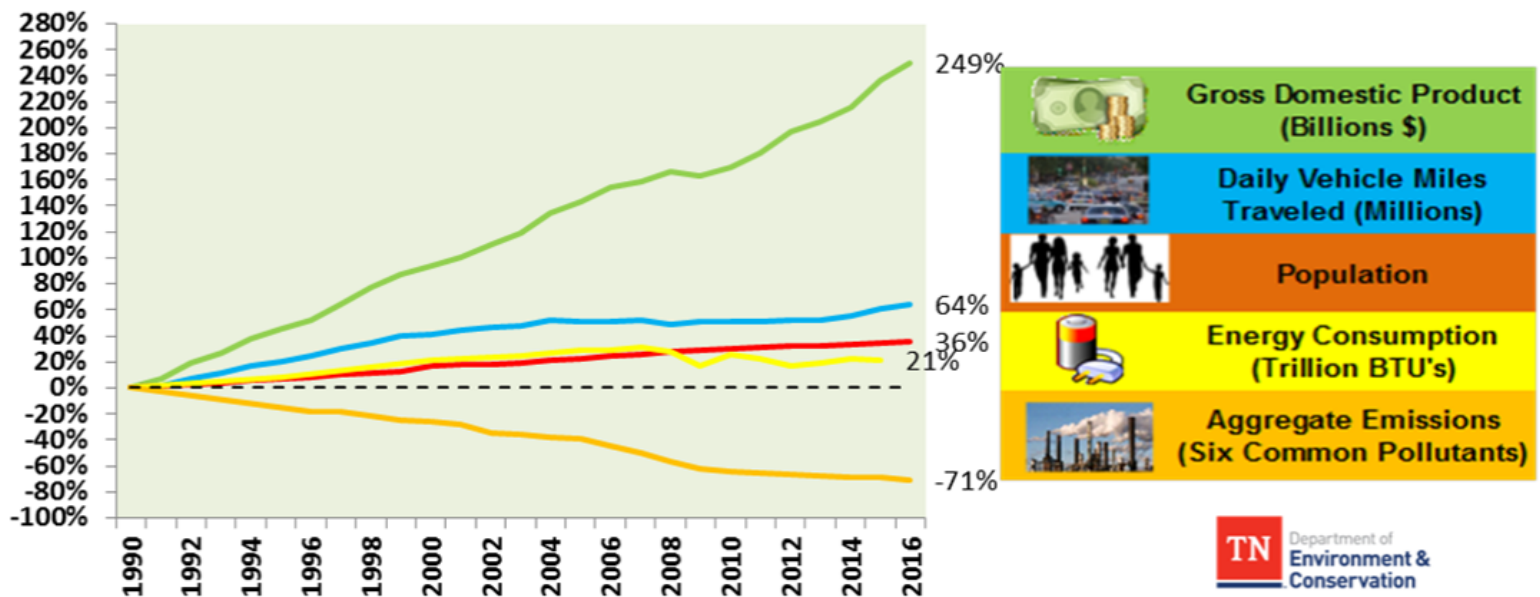


To learn more about the nine principles and how to apply them, you can download the [Tennessee Yardstick Workbook](#). The workbook guides you through an evaluation of your yard and yard care practices. Each action you take (or have already taken) earns you "inches" on the Tennessee Yardstick. A yard that measures up to at least 36 inches is a Tennessee Smart Yard!

A Tennessee Smart Yard can take any form - unique or traditional. In fact, you can create a Tennessee Smart Yard simply by changing the way you take care of your yard and manage your stormwater. With a Tennessee Smart Yard, you avoid wasting water, fertilizers or pesticides, and Tennessee's waterways and wildlife are protected for generations to come. Most importantly, you win and so does Tennessee's environment.

Tennessee's beloved Chattanooga was once named the "worst city in the nation for particulate air pollution." Factors such as topography, heavy industry, and lack of environmental regulations contributed to this notorious designation. Consequently, the Clean Air Act and other impactful environmental regulations were passed in the 1970s. Over the years, environmental regulations have become more specific as processes change and technology improves. At the same time, Tennessee has seen tremendous growth in manufacturing and Gross Domestic Product (GDP, an indicator of economic growth). As you can see from the graphic below, while GDP has increased significantly from 1990 to 2016, air pollution has decreased. This indicates that environmental protection and economic growth do not have to be mutually exclusive. In fact, many pollution-reducing practices save money by reducing energy and waste disposal costs.

Tennessee Comparison of Growth Areas and Emissions 1990 to 2016



TDEC has two programs that help small businesses and manufacturers comply with environmental regulations. Check out the [TN Small Business Environmental Assistance Program](#) and [Pollution Prevention Program](#) to learn how your business can contribute to lower air and water pollution.

TN State Park's Spring Hikes



Spring Hikes

TENNESSEE STATE PARKS
FREE | MARCH 22, 2025

Spring is just around the corner and many of us are anxious to enjoy the outdoors again. And what better way to do that than to join one of Tennessee State Park's [Spring Hikes](#).

On March 22nd, State Parks across Tennessee will be offering free ranger-led hikes that highlight the natural, cultural, and historical treasures our parks have to offer. Whether you are looking for a short nature trail or an adventurous endeavor through a park's most remote stretches, there is something for hikers of all skill levels. From the cypress swamps of the Mississippi River in West Tennessee to the rugged ridge tops and waterfalls in the middle of the state to the majestic mountains in the East, every park showcases a unique piece of Tennessee's outdoor beauty.

National Nutrition Month

March is [National Nutrition Month](#), so challenge yourself to start taking small steps to healthier eating. The [EatRight.org](#) website has a lot of great resources to help you get started. While working on improving your nutrition, you can also focus on ways to reduce your food waste such as freezing foods to help them stay fresh and last longer. Check out these myths and facts about frozen foods from the National Frozen & Refrigerated Foods Association (NFRA).

MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT

FROZEN FOOD

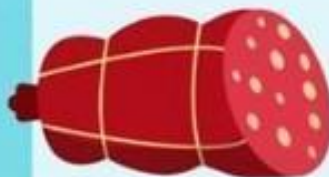
MYTH: Fresh produce is the best way to eat "farm-to-table".



FACT:

Produce picked at the height of ripeness and then flash frozen locks in flavor and nutrition, whereas fresh produce can take weeks to travel from farm to store.

MYTH: Frozen foods have a lot of preservatives.



FACT:

Freezing is actually the best-known method of preserving food. The quick freezing process preserves the nutritional value, freshness and flavor without preservatives.



FACT:

Most seafood is frozen within hours of being caught, preserving more of its flavor and nutritional value than the "fresh" seafood found in markets!

MYTH: You can't eat frozen foods if you're dieting.



FACT:

Frozen produce allows access to nutritious produce year round. Plus, many frozen foods are pre-portioned to help you stay on track.

MYTH: Frozen food is high in sodium.



FACT:

In most cases, sodium is added to frozen food for taste, not as a preservative. Look for low sodium and pre-portioned options in the freezer aisle.



Small Business Environmental Assistance Program Corner

As spring approaches, it's a great time to recognize [TDEC's Brownfields program](#), this program is focused on revitalizing properties that are vacant or underutilized due to environmental contamination or the perception of contamination. Brownfields are located across Tennessee, in towns of all sizes, both rural and urban.

Last year, the [Brownfield Redevelopment Area Grant \(BRAG\)](#) was established to encourage environmentally sound redevelopment of properties. The grant is open to subdivisions of



the state, like counties, municipalities, and development districts to name a few. While non-profits are not eligible for this particular grant, there are opportunities to partner with subdivisions.

Businesses also have an opportunity with Brownfields, too! In Tennessee, there is a tax credit available called Schedule BP - Franchise and Excise Brownfield Property Credit. To receive the credit, a taxpayer submits a claim and documentation for the credit showing that capital investment was made to a qualifying development project. The credit differs depending on where the property was purchased. There are specific requirements for the tax credit, so make sure your business or company works with the Department of Revenue to get the credit. More information is available on the Tennessee Department of Revenue [website](#).

Recipe of the Month

Looking for some ideas of what to do with those leftovers after your St. Patrick's Day celebration? Try these [tasty ideas](#) that will turn your corned beef and potatoes into some fun new recipes.



Events:

[Tennessee State Parks Events](#)

[Household Hazardous Waste Collection](#)

[Environmental Education in Tennessee Events](#)

[Socket, Nashville's Sustainability Outlet](#)

Funding Opportunities:

[TDEC Grants and Programs](#)

[Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program](#)

[TDOT Rural Planning Initiative](#)

[Grants.gov](#)

Conferences, Workshops, & Training Opportunities:

[green|leader - The Nation's First Localized Sustainability Certificate](#)
Ongoing Opportunity

[Tennessee Environmental Network Show of the South \(TENSOS\)](#)
Chattanooga, TN
May 14-16, 2025

[ReFED Food Waste Solutions Summit](#)
Seattle, WA
June 23-25, 2024

[Drive Electric Momentum Summit 2025](#)
Middle Tennessee State University
June 24, 2024



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