

Landscapes That Help the Chesapeake Bay

Water flowing from the landscape after rain or during irrigation can pick up sediments and nutrients that pollute streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay.

When you prevent pollutants from washing off your property you protect your local streams and the Chesapeake Bay. The yard care practices that follow can lead to healthier plants and create a landscape that traps pollutants before they can harm our waterways.

Keep Paved Areas to a Minimum

Hard surfaces don't allow water to soak into the ground. Water that drains off quickly takes pollutants with it and leads to stream channel erosion. If you are planning to install a walk or patio, consider using these materials:

- Gravel
- Wood chips
- Stepping stones
- Bricks on sand (without mortar)

Control the Flow of Water From Your Yard

- Maintain dense, healthy plant cover over your whole yard.
- Make the downspouts on your house discharge to grassy areas or planting beds where the water can soak in. Use splash blocks to soften the impact.

Use Planting Beds

Group plants in mulched beds instead of placing them individually around the yard. This technique gives a more natural look to the landscape and makes watering and weed control much easier.

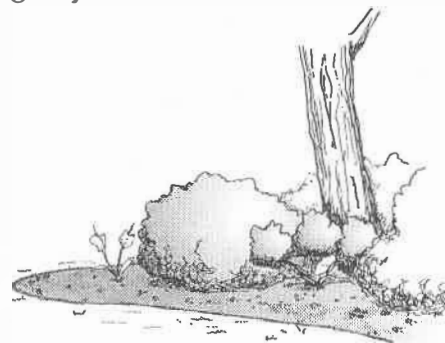
Mulched planting beds:

- provide an area to recycle yard wastes,
- protect plants from lawn equipment,
- moderate soil temperatures,
- conserve water,
- help control weeds, and
- add organic matter to soil.

Note: Do not pile mulch more than 2 inches deep.

Rethink Your Lawn

Healthy turf does an excellent job of protecting soil, slowing runoff, and trapping pollutants, but the basic upkeep takes energy, time, and money. You can conserve all three in the following ways:



Mulched planting beds create a more natural look and provide beneficial areas for plants.

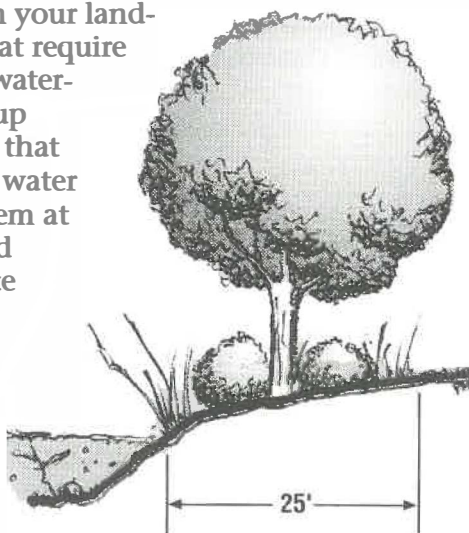
- Reassess your need for lawn area. Weigh the benefits of scenery, sitting areas, and play areas against the cost of maintenance. If you have more lawn than you need, consider making it smaller. Your needs will change as your lifestyle changes.
- Plant wildflowers. They provide an attractive, low maintenance ground cover. Publication AM 70, available from the Home and Garden Information Center, explains how to establish and care for wildflower plantings. Call 1-800-342-2507 to receive a copy.

In some parts of the yard, grass can be difficult or impossible to grow or to mow. An area may be too shady, too rocky, or too hilly. Often you can improve the conditions, but it may be easier to plant something more suitable for the site. Many ground covers are less demanding than turf. Table 1 has some good choices.

Conserve Water

Water-saving landscape practices reduce runoff and help keep pollutants out of storm drains that empty into waterways feeding the Bay. Here are some ideas:

- Use plants adapted for this region. They can better withstand periodic drought. If a "problem" plant dies in your landscape, replace it with a native.
- Try xeriscaping, using plants that are extremely drought tolerant. Call the Home and Garden Information Center at 1-800-342-2507 for a fact sheet on xeriscaping.
- If you want certain plants in your landscape that require regular watering, group them so that you can water all of them at once and minimize waste.



Buffers protect the water supply and provide habitats for wildlife.

Table 1. Height

Bearberry <i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	6-12"	s, psh
Bearberry Cotoneaster <i>Cotoneaster dammeri</i>	12-18" ^{ab}	s ^b
Blue Fescue <i>Festuca ovina v. glauca</i>	6-8"	s
Bugleweed <i>Ajuga reptans</i>	6-9"	sh
Candytuft <i>Iberis sempervirens</i>	6-12"	s
Checkerberry or Creeping Wintergreen <i>Gaultheria procumbens</i>	6"	sh
Creeping Juniper <i>Juniperus horizontalis</i>	12-24"	s
Germander <i>Teucrium chamaedrys</i>	12"	s, h
Liriope <i>Liriope muscari</i>	18"	sh
Pachyandra <i>Pachysandra terminalis</i>	6-12"	h

s = sun, sh = shade, psh = part shade

- Use soaker hoses or drip-irrigation, instead of a sprinkler. The initial cost might be higher, but these devices do the job with much less water, and send the water right where it's needed.
- If you water your lawn, do so only when the grass shows signs that it needs water. The lawn will develop a blue-gray color and will leave footprints when you walk on it. Water to a depth of at least 4-6 inches. **Light, frequent watering can actually damage your lawn.** A newly seeded or newly sodded lawn must be watered regularly until it is established. Unless you have bluegrass, allow a mature lawn to go dormant during dry spells. Dormancy during dry weather is a survival mechanism and the lawn will usually recover when rainfall returns.

Leave Buffer Strips

If you live next to a stream, lake, or other body of water, consider leaving a 25-foot or wider strip of unmowed grass or woodland along the water. This will:

- slow runoff,
- filter water pollutants, and
- provide food and shelter for wildlife.

Deal With Pests Sensibly

Learn about Integrated Pest Management (IPM). You can reduce or eliminate the use of traditional chemical control of pests in your home landscape and still have a desirable lawn or garden. The basics of IPM are:

- plant a variety of species to avoid widespread damage by a single disease or pest,
- use disease and insect-resistant plants, and
- monitor your landscape to catch problems early.

If your plants have problems, first consider their basic needs like proper pH, soil fertility, and drainage. Many potential pests don't need to be controlled. Learn to distinguish between minor damage and significant attacks. Try mechanical controls of pests and diseases such as hand-picking, trapping, or pruning. If you decide to use a pesticide, choose the least toxic one with the shortest residual that will be effective. Learn to identify and appreciate beneficial insects.

Conserve Energy

Emissions from burned fossil fuels deposit pollutants directly on the waters of the Chesapeake Bay, and on the land where they can be washed into streams. Actions taken at home to reduce energy demand can help



Help protect your local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. Proper yard care practices can give you a beautiful yard and help protect the Bay!

reduce pollution. Homeowners can use trees to reduce energy consumed by heating and air conditioning units. Plant evergreen trees on the northwest side of the house to protect it from winter winds. Deciduous trees planted on the south and southwest sides block the sun during the summer and allow the sun to penetrate and warm the house during the winter.

References:

Kissida, Gould, & Pitt, "Residential Landscape Design With Trees," Department of Horticulture, University of Maryland, 1978.

"Yard Care and the Environment Series," The University of Wisconsin Extension, 1993.

Make Your Yard a BayScape!

The ultimate "Bay-friendly" landscape is a BayScape. Developed by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the BayScapes Program presents a gradual plan for transforming a residential yard into an environmentally sound landscape that benefits people, wildlife, and the Bay. To learn more about BayScapes, call the Chesapeake Bay Regional Information Service, 1-800-662-CRIS.

**HAVE A LAWN OR GARDEN QUESTION?
CALL THE HOME AND GARDEN
INFORMATION CENTER AT
1-800-342-2507**

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, University of Maryland, College Park, and local governments. Thomas A. Fretz, Director of Maryland Cooperative Extension, University of Maryland.

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P97/R99

