

# Yard Care Guide for Your Congregation and Home

## 1. Reduce your lawn with native landscaping

Reduce your lawn with native landscaping that restores wildlife habitat! Here are some steps:

- Replace grass with native ground covers, which require little to no mowing.
- Enlarge or establish garden beds with native perennials and shrubs.
- Plant native shade perennials or add mulch and leaf litter around the base of trees, instead of grass.

In frequently wet areas and near downspouts, create a rain garden by planting native species of wetland plants and shrubs.



*Did you know that lawns are the BIGGEST crop in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed? A green lawn is considered by many to be the gold standard, but they can be hugely detrimental to the Bay with all the fertilizer, water and gas-powered equipment used for maintenance.*



Groundcover: *Conoclinium coelestinum*

## 2. Mow High and Leave Grass Clippings

Raise the blade on your mower to cut grass 2 ½ to 3 ½ inches from the ground.

### Benefits of Taller Grasses

- Shade out weeds and help prevent their germination;
- Allow grass roots to grow deeper, improving water infiltration and reducing runoff;
- Stay green longer during drought

After mowing, leave the grass clippings on the lawn. These cuttings provide up to half of the nitrogen your lawn needs each year. And it's free!

### 3. Reconsider How You Fertilize and Weed

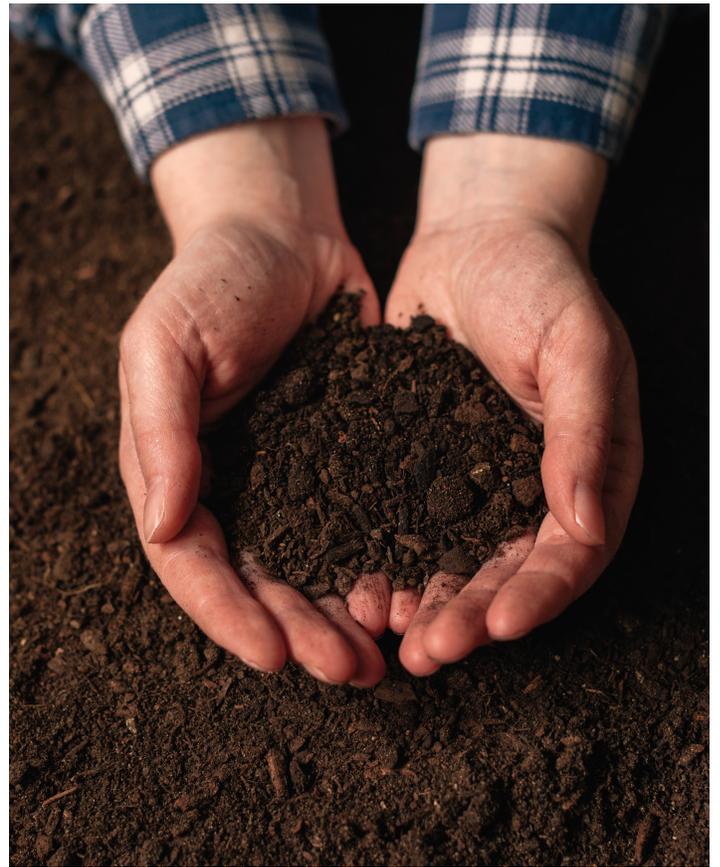
There are over 3 million acres of turf in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and half of those lawns are fertilized with synthetic fertilizers. Half of fertilized lawns are over-fertilized, causing stormwater pollution that significantly degrades our water ecosystems.

#### Fertilizer:

- You may not even need fertilizer if you have high quality soil. Send a sample of your soil off for testing to find out what it needs. Resources listed on the back.
- Apply organic fertilizers, like compost, as needed and in moderation instead of synthetic fertilizer.

#### Weeds:

- What you think is a weed may be beneficial for your soil and local wildlife. For example, White Clover adds nitrogen to the soil, and provides food for pollinators.
- Instead of applying herbicides, try removing weeds with a hand tool. Another good alternative is spraying a 10% strength vinegar solution



### 4. Replace Gas-Fueled Equipment & Identify Certified Landscapers

Gas powered lawn mowers, trimmers, edgers and weed whackers are a significant source of air pollution in the Bay watershed.

- Evaluate your equipment, considering simple tools that do the same job without the pollution, like manual mowers and trimmers. You can also upgrade your lawn mower from a 2-stroke to a 4-stroke engine to pollute less.
- Request that your lawn maintenance contractor become certified as a Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional (CBLP). This program educates on best practices for yard care that keep the Bay healthy. Alternatively, seek out organic lawn care companies that use Integrated Pest Management (IPM).



Manual lawn mower

## Resources

**Soil Testing** Call University of Maryland Baltimore Extension Office for guidance and instructions at 410-856-1850

**Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professionals**

Learn about certification programs and recommended contractors at <https://cblpro.org/>

**Planting with Natives** Check out University of Maryland Extension and Maryland Native Plant Society for recommendations and resources to replace turf with native landscaping.

<https://extension.umd.edu/>

<https://mdflora.org/>

**Creating a Rain Garden** Guidance provided here:

<https://www.bluewaterbaltimore.org/protect/create-a-rain-garden/>

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