



Conservation Landscaping Fact Sheet

Fact: When pesticides are regularly applied, 60–90% of earthworms are killed. Earthworms are invaluable for healthy soil. (Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture)



What is the Delaware Estuary?

The Delaware Estuary is located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States, surrounded by portions of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. An estuary is where fresh water from a river mixes with salt water from an ocean or bay. Estuaries are fragile ecosystems, which support some of the Earth's richest and most productive habitats. The Delaware Estuary stretches approximately 134 miles, from the falls of the Delaware River between Trenton, New Jersey and Morrisville, Pennsylvania, south to the mouth of the Delaware Bay between Cape May, New Jersey and Cape Henlopen, Delaware.



What is Conservation Landscaping?

The impacts of daily landscape decisions reach far beyond individual property lines. By better managing the landscapes that we are responsible for, whether it is our backyards at home, school, or work, we can all make positive contributions to the habitats around us, the wildlife that they support, and to water quality in the region.

The conservation landscaping approach to lawn and garden management works with nature to reduce pollution and enhance wildlife habitat. Conservation landscaping requires that you give some thought to your lawn and garden care, including the amount of fertilizer and pesticides you use, the size of your manicured lawn area, and the use of native plants.

Why is it important to practice Conservation Landscaping?

What occurs on land has a direct impact on the quality of our water and on wildlife. As the population in the Delaware Estuary continues to disperse outward from our urban areas, there are an increasing number of residential properties and businesses that are maintaining manicured lawns. It is important that you know that the daily decisions you make about the care and maintenance of your lawn and garden affect wildlife habitat and water quality. By practicing conservation landscaping you will be:

- Replacing habitat and creating new habitat for wildlife that has been displaced by development;
- Using less chemicals on your property, thereby reducing the level of toxic runoff into our rivers, creeks, and streams; and
- Planting native vegetation, which will help to conserve water and create wildlife habitat.

For more information:

www.nps.gov/plants/pubs/nativesMD

www.greenworks.tv/index.asp

(search: conservation landscaping)

www.nwf.org/education

(search Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program)

For more information about the Delaware Estuary call 1-800-445-4935, or visit www.DelawareEstuary.org and www.delep.org

How do you get started?

All great landscapes begin with a plan. When developing a conservation landscaping plan there are many factors you need to take into consideration. These include your geographic location, climate, exposure, soil type, grading and drainage issues, and style of garden desired. You also need to consider the protection of water quality, habitat enhancement, and maintenance.

For a low-maintenance garden that will bring you years of pleasure and that will help protect water quality, your plan should include the following:

Testing Soils and Recycling Nutrients – Use a reliable soil test to determine soil nutrient status and what soil amendments are required. Composted organics from your kitchen are excellent nutrient sources that will enhance soil texture, increase water-holding capacity, and decrease reliance on chemical fertilizers.

Reducing Impermeable Surfaces – To prevent stormwater runoff and to increase infiltration, the less impervious surfaces you have in your garden, such as asphalt and concrete, the better.

Using Native Plants – Native plants are adapted to local soil, rainfall, and temperature conditions and have developed natural defenses to many insects and diseases, therefore they require less water, fertilizers, and pesticides. By using native plants, trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses, you can save money, reduce water pollution, and make your garden more habitable for native birds, mammals, amphibians, and insects. Many of these insects (i.e. ladybugs and preying mantises) are beneficial in controlling garden pests that attack your plants.

Creating Habitat – Habitat refers to the food, water, shelter, space, and nesting sites that all living creatures need to survive. Installing houses for ladybugs, birds and bats, or placing a birdbath in your garden are simple steps that you can take to increase wildlife habitat.

Conserving Water – Collect rainwater and use it to water your garden. If possible, water during the early morning hours when the plants are better able to absorb the water and less water is lost to evaporation. These water conservation strategies can be supplemented by using drip irrigation, which will also reduce the amount of stormwater runoff pollution into our local waterways. Adjust your sprinkler so you are watering plants, not the sidewalk, road or windows.

Top-Dressing the Soil – Top-dress soil surfaces with a layer of mulch to reduce water loss, suppress weed growth, increase soil organic matter, and to provide an environment for earthworms. A layer of compost mulch should be about 3 inches deep. You can also use 2 to 4 inches of hardwood mulch or wood chips, 6 inches of dry leaves, or 2 inches of dry grass clippings.



Popular plants that are native to the Delaware Estuary:

Flowering Perennials

<i>Butterflyweed</i>	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>
<i>New England aster</i>	<i>Aster novae-angliae</i>
<i>Blazing star</i>	<i>Liatris spicata</i>
<i>Bergamot</i>	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>
<i>Beard tongue</i>	<i>Penstemon digitalis</i>
<i>Eastern coneflower</i>	<i>Rudbeckia fulgida</i>
<i>Black-eyed Susan</i>	<i>R. hirta</i>
<i>Wrinkle-leaf goldenrod</i>	<i>Solidago rugosa</i>

Grasses

<i>Big blue-stem</i>	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>
<i>Witchgrass</i>	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>
<i>Little blue-stem</i>	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>
<i>Indian grass</i>	<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>
<i>Purple top</i>	<i>Tridens flavus</i>

Trees

<i>Black gum, tupelo</i>	<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>
<i>Fringe-tree</i>	<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>
<i>Flowering dogwood</i>	<i>Cornus florida</i>
<i>River birch</i>	<i>Betula nigra</i>
<i>Redbud</i>	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>
<i>Red cedar</i>	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>
<i>Serviceberry</i>	<i>Amelanchier canadensis</i>
<i>Willow Oak</i>	<i>Quercus phellos</i>
<i>Wild Black Cherry</i>	<i>Prunus serotina Ehrh.</i>
<i>White ash</i>	<i>Fraxinus americana</i>

