

Tips for Green Leaders

-in- FREDERICK COUNTY



Neighborhood Green: *Convert your Lawn into a Native Habitat*



How many hours do you spend each year mowing your lawn?

From Turf to Forest

Of the 400,000 acres that make up Frederick County, 100,000 are turf lawns. Replacing wild spaces with manicured lawns creates a number of problems for the health of wildlife, local waterways, and the Chesapeake Bay. Unlike native ecosystems, turf lawns do not support wildlife populations like birds, amphibians, and mammals. And not only do grass lawns lead to increased fertilizer and pesticide use, they also have a reduced capacity to absorb water and pollutants in comparison to ecosystems like forests and wetlands. Without nutrient and pollutant buffers, waterways leading to the Bay get polluted, harming plants, wildlife, and resources on which Maryland depends.

A program called Neighborhood Green offers Frederick County residents information and limited cost-share for alternatives to turf lawns which benefit the environment and landowners alike. Maintaining a lawn is difficult and expensive – fertilizing, killing weeds, mowing, and weed-whacking. By reducing turf and

increasing natural landscapes, residents can enjoy less work-intensive properties that provide the viewing pleasure of song birds and butterflies, cool shade in the summer, and often an added privacy buffer.

Workshops, resources, and volunteer assistance are provided by Frederick County Government Community Restoration Coordinator Heather Montgomery, Department of Natural Resources Forester Mike Kay, and other professionals to make the transition easy and fun. The workshops help participants understand the benefits of removing invasive species, planting native plants, and creating diverse habitat for wildlife. Each household creates a plan for their property, and the group comes together to discuss the plan and make suggestions. The program connects participants with services such as invasive species removal, native plant purchasing, grant funding, and potential tax incentives. Program coordinators and volunteers can even offer some assistance with labor. Neighborhood Green is a one-of-a-kind program that provides Frederick County residents with an excellent opportunity to improve their properties.

If not a lawn, then what?

8 Ways to Reduce Turf:

- 1) Create a wildlife habitat by planting native trees and shrubs
- 2) Plant moss or clover
- 3) Plant edible groundcover, like strawberries and herbs
- 4) Install a rain garden
- 5) Plant native ornamental grasses
- 6) Start a food or ornamental garden
- 7) Install a stream buffer
- 8) Plant a pollinator garden



Planting a native wildflower garden provides habitat for pollinators.

Contact Information

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Neighborhood Green Webpage

www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/NGreen

Neighborhood Green in the News

Check out these articles:
tinyurl.com/8224cfl,
tinyurl.com/782ac5k

A Neighborhood Green Story



A maple seedling peeks out of its protective tubing



Linda Scheer clears away dead invasive vines.



Forester Mike Kay and volunteers plant native seedlings.

About 12 years ago, Bob and Linda Scheer signed up for a state program that provided tax benefits to property owners supporting wildlife habitat. At a ten-year inspection, they were surprised when Forester Mike Kay informed them that their property was no longer providing the optimum habitat that it could. The Scheers were of the “let nature take its course” philosophy. But, it turned out that the tangled vines and sharp thorns constantly encroaching on their pathways were actually invasive species like Russian Olive, Japanese Honeysuckle, and Multiflora Rose. Not only were the invasive species difficult for the Scheers to maintain, they were also choking out native plant species that help to support native wildlife.

The Scheers decided to join the Neighborhood Green program in spring of 2010. Education and support provided by expert facilitators helped the Scheers to embrace their project and create a detailed plan to improve about 65% of their property. They started by having Frederick County Weed Control spray targeted herbicides to kill invasive species. The dead invasive species were removed, leaving only native plants. Kay and Maryland Conservation Corps Volunteers planted native seedlings to fill in open areas.

The Scheer’s property is on its way to providing hundreds of additional native trees. This will contribute to their total of eight forested acres that provide habitat and act as a buffer for a creek that runs behind their home. With the mixture of open areas, brush piles, and forest, their property provides exactly the type of mixed habitat that Maryland needs.

The Scheers’ Neighborhood Green Timeline



Before removing invasive species...



After removing invasive species...



After planting native trees...



Program Benefits

Neighborhood Green has helped the Scheers to:

1. Enjoy and become passionate about natural diversity
2. Gain an interest in identifying native plants
3. Feel accomplished and recognized for their efforts
4. Find a place to relax together, listen to music, and watch birds
5. Adopt a sense of community and environmental stewardship

<< The Scheers can now watch native birds, like this blue jay



The Tips for Green Leaders in Frederick County is a public outreach component of the Frederick County Office of Sustainability and Environmental Resources’ Green Homes Challenge (GHC) and the Monocacy & Catoctin Watershed Alliance (MCWA). For more information about the GHC or MCWA, please visit: www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/GreenHomes or www.watershed-alliance.com/. Or, call the GHC Program Coordinator at 301.600.7414 or MCWA Coordinator at 301.600.1741.