



Simple Ways You Can Help Save the Bay

1. Test your soil

Find out what level of nutrients your lawn already has and what it needs before you consider using fertilizers or chemicals. Many people apply fertilizer when the native soils already have all that they need to produce a beautiful lawn. Unfortunately, excess fertilizer doesn't stay on the lawn. It ends up running into the nearest tributary and into the Bay contributing to health problems. The University of Maryland cooperative extension service has soil test kits available at a very low cost to help you maximize your investment in your lawn. Talbot County extension is 410-822-1244.



2. Fertilize only when and where necessary

After testing soil, use the recommended amounts of fertilizer needed. Be sure to keep it off of pavements, sidewalks and driveways. If fertilizer is needed, it is best to apply it once in the fall. Never use fertilizer for any other purposes such as de-icing.

3. Divert your rooftop runoff into a new rain garden or rain barrels



30% of the pollution load falls to the ground during rain storms. You can reduce rainwater impact by making sure your downspouts do not discharge directly onto pavement. You can construct a beautiful garden that holds your stormwater before allowing it to drain into Tanyard Branch. Rain barrels connected to your downspouts allow you to store rainwater and use it at a later time to water your garden or your yard. Rain barrels are available at www.cbtrust.org/site/c.miJPKXPCJnH/b.5458173/k.8975/Rain_Barrels

4. Leave grass clippings on the lawn

As an alternative to chemical fertilizers, leave grass clippings on your lawn to provide the soil with many nutrients. It is also a great way to recycle the grass with very low maintenance.

5. Use compost as fertilizer

Another fertilizer alternative for the garden is to create a compost pile that reuses food waste, grass clippings, yard waste, and other natural ingredients to make a nutrient and mineral-rich compost that can be added to garden soil to increase productivity and health of the soil. You can also purchase compost in bags or in bulk from garden centers. Additional information on composting can be found at www.epa.gov/wastes/conserves/rrr/composting/



6. Mow the lawn at the proper height

Set your mower blade height to 3-inch and keep the blades sharp. Many people cut their grass too short, which never allows the grass to get ahead of the weeds or develop a strong root system. Strong roots are needed to get your lawn through drought. A general rule of thumb is to never cut more than one third of the blade. If you allow your lawn to grow longer it will shade out weeds and develop healthy roots system. Consider using a push mower in place of a motorized mower.



7. Reduce use of pesticides and herbicides by at least 50%

Pesticides and herbicides poison your yard's balanced ecosystem by killing the natural predators and native plants that would otherwise help your yard maintain its health. Take the time to monitor the natural systems in your yard.



Adopt a natural, integrated pest management strategy around your home that reduces or eliminates your use of chemicals. Only use, or have your lawn professional apply, chemicals when all other options have been exhausted. Even then take care to use the minimal amount needed. Alternatives to chemicals include using beneficial insects and attracting natural predators to your yard. Additional information can be found at

www.beyondpesticides.org

8. Plant native trees and shrubs

A mix of native plants will decrease pests, disease, and weed problems as well as provide valuable food, shelter, and cover for all kinds of critters. Ask your local nursery to provide you with a list of native trees and shrubs they offer or get advice from the cooperative extension service. Additional information can be found at mdflora.org

9. Provide wildlife habitat

Wildlife such as hummingbirds, hawks, fox and other birds and small mammals need a source of food, water, and shelter, particularly in urban and industrial areas where habitat has been lost. Plant trees and shrubs provide a food source, especially in the winter. Consider also providing a water source.



10. Reduce your lawn size

How much lawn area do you really need? Assess your lawn use and reduce the grassy area to the minimal amount needed. Plant buffers of native trees, shrubs, and gardens in the remaining yard that will soak up excess nutrients and prevent soil erosion.

For information, please contact Drew Koslow, Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy. Our phone number is 443-385-0511 and our email is info@midshoreriverkeeper.org