

FACT SHEET

Conservation Landscaping - What's So Great About Native Plants?

Spring is here and planting season has begun! Before you get out your lawn mowers and head to the nursery for plants and mulch, consider incorporating conservation landscaping elements into your property.

Conservation Landscaping Elements

- ▶ Reduced land disturbance - Avoid disturbing existing habitats and natural features.
- ▶ Reduced lawn or high-maintenance areas - Replace turf and ornamental plantings with landscape beds filled with native plants.
- ▶ Use of native plants - Replace dead or dying non-native plants in existing landscapes and use native plants in all new landscaping beds.
- ▶ No invasive species - Non-native plants can spread through the landscape with abandon because they may have few insect predators to curb their growth, which can lead to a decline in native plant species and native insect and wildlife species.
- ▶ Improved water quality - Native plants planted on slopes, in riparian corridors, along drainage swales, and in stormwater BMPs prevent erosion and pollution by stabilizing the soil, slowing the flow of water, filtering pollutants, and reducing stormwater volumes.
- ▶ Enhanced and created wildlife habitat - Providing a variety of native trees, shrubs, and perennials in your landscape increases biodiversity by attracting diverse wildlife species.

Benefits of Conservation Landscaping

- ▶ Provides food and habitat for local and migratory animals including insects, birds, and mammals. This helps preserve the balance of natural ecosystems.
- ▶ Reduces the time and expense of mowing, watering, and fertilizing.
- ▶ Provides more visual appeal throughout the year with a variety of flowers, fruits, and leaf color.
- ▶ Native trees and shrubs have larger root systems than turf grass, which means water can infiltrate into the ground more readily. These plants also use more rainwater for growth than a lawn area.

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ The average homeowner spends 40 hours mowing their lawns, and grass clippings consume 25 to 40 percent of landfill space during a growing season.
- ▶ 10,000 SF of turf grass requires 10,000 gallons of water per summer to stay green. 30 percent of water on the East Coast goes toward watering lawns.
- ▶ 96 percent of terrestrial birds rear their young on insects. 90 percent of moth and butterfly caterpillars are very particular about eating only native plants.
- ▶ More than 5,000 insects are needed to raise a clutch of Chickadees during the breeding season.

WE CAN HELP!

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WHAT IS A NATIVE PLANT?

Native plants occur naturally in the area in which they evolved and are uniquely adapted to local soils and climate conditions. Native plants generally require less watering and fertilizer than non-native species and may be more resistant to insects and disease. Our native plant and animal species evolved together - native insects like the taste of native plants! Removing native plants from the landscape reduces the populations of native insects, songbirds, and small mammals.

NATIVE PLANT RESOURCES

- ▶ Local nurseries and garden centers
- ▶ Penn State Extension
<https://extension.psu.edu/pennsylvania-native-plants-for-the-perennial-garden>
- ▶ Pennsylvania Native Plant Society
<http://www.panativeplantsociety.org>
- ▶ Native Plant Conference, Millersville, PA, June 6-9
<http://www.millersvillenativeplants.org/faq-native-plants/>