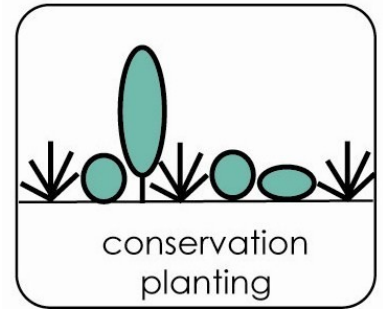


naturalize

plant for rainwater infiltration

what is naturalizing?

Naturalizing or conservation planting is replacing areas of turf and bare soil with a diverse mix of plants such as trees, shrubs, perennials, and groundcovers. Although turf areas appear to be pervious, the opposite is true. Since turf is often placed on compacted soil after construction, that green, lush lawn covers an area of impervious surface. By removing turf, aerating and turning the soil, amending the soil and adding plants, rainwater can be better absorbed. Trees, shrubs and perennials also have a longer growing season than many grasses so they actively use water at more times of the year. They also have deeper roots that can capture more rainwater, and funnel more rainwater into the soil.



what's wrong with my existing plants?



The problem is not in your existing plants! The problem is in the lack of diversity within the plants, and the large amounts of turf grass that accommodate our residential landscapes. By increasing the diversity of your plant palette, you not only aid in rainwater remediation, but provide habitat for birds and other wildlife that depend on biodiversity of plant life to survive. Conservation planting with trees and shrubs can also reduce energy bills by providing shade and wind protection to your home.

How do I turn a turf area into a conservation planting?

Remove turf and amend the soil with organic material to break up compacted clay. The ideal amount of organic soil amendment is 25-50% by volume. Choose plants that are suitable for the location, cover bare areas with mulch, and maintain the area to meet your own landscaping goals. Conservation areas can be actively managed for a manicured look, or left to grow more informal depending on your landscaping goals.



Maintenance

Like any new landscape, conservation landscapes will require some upkeep, but the maintenance is usually less in the long run and less costly to your wallet. The new plants will need watering and monitoring during the first season until they become established. Disturbed soil is often prone to invasion by weeds and a planted area may require some weeding. A 3-4 inch layer of mulch will help curb weed growth as well as conserve moisture between waterings. In time, a conservation landscape will require less watering than a lawn. Over time, plants spread to fill gaps and natural cycles help with pest control. Garden maintenance is reduced to seasonal cleanup and occasional weeding or plant management. The savings realized by using little or no chemicals, and less water and gas, can more than make up for initial costs of installing the landscaping.

what do I plant?

When it comes to the plants, it is important to avoid invasive species. Not only are we trying to aid in the stormwater problem, but also in the restoration of natural environment. The simple addition of a new planting bed can do both! While you are planning the layout, remember to think in layers. Consider having a tree layer, an understory (shrub) layer, and a lower (groundcover) layer. More layers mean more surface area of plant material, increasing stormwater capture and providing various niches for animals such as birds and butterflies. Many of our common landscape plants, are not the best options for conservation plantings. The following table provides a list of replacements for the commonly “misused” plants.

Instead of:	Try:
 Nandina	Inkberry, Winterberry, Chokeberry, American holly
Bradford Pear	Yellowwood, Native Magnolias, Serviceberries
Russian Olive (<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i>)	Fringe tree, Devilwood, Buckeyes, Serviceberries
Autumn olive (<i>Elaeagnus umbellata</i>)	Witch Hazel, Chokeberry, Wild Plums
Japanese honeysuckle	Trumpet honeysuckle, Cross Vine
Miscanthus grass	Switchgrass, Indian Grass, Purpletop, Pink Muhly grass
Privet	Blackhaw, Rusty Blackhaw, Indian Cherry, Native Dogwoods
English Ivy	Virginia creeper, Wild Ginger, Solomon's Seal, Woodland Aster
Burning bush	Possumhaw, Virginia Sweetspire, Witch alder
Barberry	Virginia Sweetspire
Fragrant Honeysuckle	Spicebush, Arrowood Viburnum, Witch Alder



resources:

[Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping - Chesapeake Natives/ USFWS](#)

[Amending Clay Soils / NCSU](#)

[Landscaping for Wildlife with Native Plants / NCSU + NC DFR](#)

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