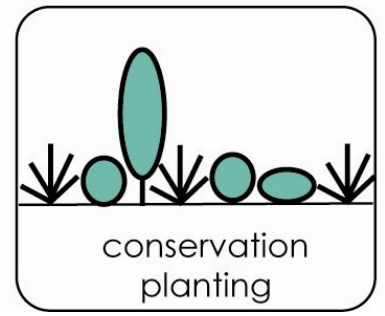


naturalize

plant for rainwater infiltration

what is naturalizing?

Naturalizing, or conservation planting, is replacing areas of turf or bare soil with a diverse mix of plants such as trees, shrubs, perennials and groundcover. Although turf areas appear to be pervious, the opposite is often true, since turf is usually placed on compacted soil after construction. That lush, green lawn probably covers an area of impervious surface. Rainwater can soak in if you remove turf, aerate and turn the soil, amend the soil where needed and add plants. 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 funnel more rainwater into the soil and capture it



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 in our residential landscapes. By increasing the diversity of your plant palette, you not only aid in rainwater remediation, but also provide habitat for birds and other wildlife that depend on plant biodiversity to survive. Conservation planting with trees and shrubs can also reduce energy bills by providing shade and wind protection to your home. Replacing just some of your turf with other plants provides benefits.

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

Remove turf and amend the soil with organic material to break up compacted soil. The ideal amount of organic soil amendment is 25-50 percent by volume. Choose plants 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 informally depending on your tastes.



maintenance:

Like any new landscape, conservation landscapes will require some upkeep, but maintenance is usually lower 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 three- to four-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. Plants will 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 few or no chemicals, less water and less gas for a mower, 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 alleviating stormwater problems, but also aid 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, which increases stormwater capture and provides 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

Miscanthus grass

Switchgrass, Indian grass, purpletop, pink muhly grass

Japanese honeysuckle

Trumpet honeysuckle, cross vine

Privet

Blackhaw, rusty blackhaw, Indian cherry, native dogwoods

Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*)

Fringe tree, devilwood, buckeyes, serviceberries

Autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)

Witch hazel, chokeberry, wild plums

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:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping: www.fws.gov/chesapeakebay/pdf/NativePlantsforWildlifeHabitatandConservationLandscaping.pdf

Landscaping for Wildlife with Native Plants, NC State University: content.ces.ncsu.edu/landscaping-for-wildlife-with-native-plants