

GARDENING AND TREASURED LANDSCAPES—GROWING OPPORTUNITIES

By Blanca Poteat, Frederick County Master Gardener, March 2023

March is a perfect time to dig into our gardens and landscapes!

How are our “gardens” and “landscapes” related? Both involve soil, water, and plants. Both support the biodiversity of insects and wildlife. Both can benefit from our stewardship.

We commonly think of gardens as planned and tended areas to grow vegetables, flowers, shrubs, and trees. Landscapes, on the other hand, may be larger natural areas and viewscapes that are planned and unplanned, private and public, tended and untended.

So gardens are small-scale landscapes.

What does the word “treasure” mean to you? Something that you value? Actions that you take to protect that valued something—how you “treasure” your “treasure”?

“Treasure” suggests the idea of riches. Gardens and landscapes are a kind of riches, a different kind of “green” that’s not bought and sold for profit, stored in a bank or jewelry box, or used to buy things. You can treasure gardens and landscapes beyond their monetary value, for their importance to your personal health and quality of life and to your community’s well-being and sustainability.

Frederick County is fortunate to be home to many gardens and treasured landscapes, “places that stand out...with many inspiring, productive, and naturally diverse lands,” according to the Sugarloaf Treasured Landscape Management Plan, page 4. These landscapes “enhance, and in some cases protect, the natural, cultural, and historical characteristics” of our home county (Livable Frederick Implementation Program, page 18) and link our communities together.

In fact, county land use planners have identified several areas that can benefit from “focused attention,” including the Sugarloaf Mountain region, the Middletown Valley, and the Catoctin Creek area. And climate change is adding urgency to these county efforts to protect and sustain these and other local and regional landscapes, productive lands, and natural resources.

Undoubtedly, you know of some gardens and landscapes that can benefit from your personal “focused attention.” Early spring is a great time to dig in!

Growing Opportunities

At home: If you have outdoor space with some soil and sunshine, whether a balcony or yard, you can plant and sustain your own garden—your own treasured landscape—in pots, planters, borders and raised beds.

Farther afield: If you have space in a community garden, or others need help with theirs, you can extend your treasured landscape efforts to include those gardens, too.

Community: If your neighborhood, school, church, or local park has a Green Team, pollinator garden, or tree planting project, you can work with other volunteers to plant and care for those shared landscapes.

You might be interested to know that in support of these treasured landscapes and gardens, last April the Maryland “senate passed House Bill 322, which compels homeowners’ associations (HOAs) and other organizations to allow ‘low-impact landscaping,’ such as rain gardens, native plant gardens, pollinator gardens, and xeriscaping in subdivisions. The law specifically forbids HOAs to require that ‘cultivated vegetation [in gardens] consist in whole or in part of turf grass,” according to an article posted on the Native Plant Society’s website (Laws Promoting Native Plants—Native Plant Conservation Campaign [nativeplantsocietyofus.org]).

The following links are just a few examples of local growing opportunities and information sources to help you enjoy and promote gardens and treasured landscapes in your home, your community, and Frederick County.

The University of Maryland Extension Frederick County Office is open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Master Gardeners provide free Saturday morning seminars, operate a Demonstration Garden, and provide other resources to help you build healthy gardens, landscapes and communities. You can also find gardening information and advice online at:

- University of MD Extension Home & Garden Information Center, <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/environmentnatural-resources/program-areas/home-and-garden-information-center>;
- Frederick County Master Gardeners Publications, <http://extension.umd.edu/locations/frederick-county/home-gardening>;
- Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/mastergardenersfrederickcountymaryland>;
- or call us at 301-600-1596.

You can consult the websites of several community gardens throughout Frederick County, including, <https://www.recreator.com/196/Community-Gardens>; <https://www.cityoffrederickmd.gov/1059/Garden-Plots>; and fnpcommunitygarden12@gmail.com.

Green Teams: These grassroots groups, growing sustainability of their schools, communities, and workplaces, have been in place at least since 2012. They include Green Team Urbana, www.greenteamurbana.com; Middletown Green Team, cunangst@ci.middletown.md.us; and Thurmont Green Team, ThurmontGreen@gmail.com. In addition, there are Sustainability offices in New Market, Thurmont, Emmitsburg, Brunswick, and the City of Frederick.

Green Schools: Students at these schools focus on growing learning activities engaged with environmental stewardship. The schools include Centerville, Myersville, and Yellow Springs Elementary Schools; Frederick, Oakdale, and Urbana High Schools, as well as the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education, <https://www.maeoe.org>.

Read about Frederick County’s land use plans, including the Sugarloaf Treasured Landscape Management Plan, <https://frederickcountymd.gov/8046/Sugarloaf-Area-Plan>, and the Livable Frederick Master Plan October 2019 Implementation Program, <https://www.frederickcountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/324268/Sugarloaf-Implementation-Plan>.

Homegrown National Park: Regenerate biodiversity one garden at a time.
<https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

Landscape America: A collaboration of NatureServe and the National Geographic Society, Landscape America is an online resource of maps, data, photos, and stories about America's natural places and open spaces to inform and inspire conservation of our lands and waters. <http://www.landscape.org/>

Maryland Green Infrastructure, Department of Natural Resources
<https://dnr.maryland.gov/land/Pages/Green-Infrastructure.aspx>

Maryland Rural Legacy Areas
<https://dnr.maryland.gov/land/Pages/RuralLegacy/All-Rural-Legacy-Areas.aspx>

National Forests Foundation: Restore landscapes and connect communities.
<https://www.nationalforests.org/who-we-are/treasured-landscapes-unforgettable-experiences>



Late summer harvest from 2022: Marigolds and sunflowers not only help to attract pollinators such as bees and birds, they protect many vegetables from pests like aphids. (Photo courtesy of Montgomery County MD Department of Environmental Protection)



Rain garden, planted in 2019, at the University of Maryland Extension Service on Montevue Lane. (Photo courtesy of University of Maryland Extension Service, Frederick County Master Gardeners)

For more information about the Frederick County Extension Master Gardener/Horticulture Program, gardening information and advice visit: <http://extension.umd.edu/locations/frederick-county/home-gardening> or call Susan Trice at the University of Maryland Extension Frederick County office, 301-600-1596. Find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/mastergardenersfrederickcountymaryland> . UME Home & Garden Information Center, <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/environmentnatural-resources/program-areas/home-and-garden-information-center> .

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