

### **Additional Guidelines and Resources for Bay Wise Home Owner visits:**

*The Bay-Wise yardstick, HO Bay-Wise packets, University of Maryland Extension website and Calvert MG website have an abundance of information.*

**Control Storm Water Runoff:** Options for slopes include terracing with cor-logs, downed trees, or rocks. Will need to add soil and compost of leaf grow before planting. If the areas is beyond our scope, such as a community run off issue, refer to appropriate local resources such as Calvert County Government or Town municipalities. Utilize resource list on the Calvert MG website.

**Lawn care:** FERTILIZE WISELY Read the introduction and summarize it for those who have lawns.

- Test your soil every 3 to 5 years. Ask immediately if they have done that. If not, give them the “Have Your Soil Tested” Fact Sheet.
- Before proceeding with questions about applying fertilizer, skip to the last two: Do they fertilize or do they have a lawn? Each receives 5 points and you can eliminate the other questions, except “grass cycling” and mowing finely shredded leaves on the lawn.
- If they fertilize, proceed with the next two questions. You may want to suggest alternatives to fertilizers, such as an application of 2 inches of Leaf Grow to the lawn every two years. This will provide organic matter, eliminate thatch build up, and will not run off into the waterways.
- Grass Cycle: refer to the Yardstick.
- Keep fertilizer off paved surfaces, do not fertilize if it may rain within 24 hours.
- Mow leaves and leave them on the lawn.

#### **Mulch appropriately:**

- Main reasons for use:
  - Weed control, Conserves soil moisture (cutting down on water requirements), Keeps plant roots cool, Minimize soil erosion
- Alternative to mulching:
  - Shade weeds out with plants, Use groundcovers instead of mulch
- Best mulch to use:
  - Shredded hardwood, pine bark, pine needles, Can also use compost, fallen leaves from your own yard, commercial LeafGro, \* Avoid using mulch around acid loving plants like azaleas/rhododendrons, it will cause Manganese toxicity and kill the plants (can use pine needles around these)
- Mulching around trees:
  - For trees and shrubs, spread mulch evenly to a depth of 2 to 3 inches; never pile mulch against tree trunks. Pull mulch back away from the trunk about 1-2”, Avoid mulch volcanoes; create a ‘donut hole’ around the trunk of the tree
- Mulching in flower beds:
  - For flowerbeds, mulch can be applied up to 3 inches deep, but should be kept pulled back slightly from plant stems.

- When to mulch:
- Summer mulches - For best weed suppression in a perennial border; apply mulch in early spring,
- Winter mulches - mulches used primarily to protect shrubs and flowers from severe winter temperatures and frost heaving are called winter mulches. They are laid down in late fall and serve as insulation during the winter

### **Encourage wildlife:**

To encourage wildlife, there are three basic needs that should be provided: Food, Shelter, and Water. A great resource is the USFW booklet, Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping, which is included in all Bay-Wise packets. The plant listings indicate which plants are especially good for wildlife using symbols and there is a very good introduction on the value of native plants in the first section of this booklet.

#### Food and Shelter:

- If homeowners want to encourage wildlife in their yard, they can do this by planting native plants that provide for two of the basic needs: food and shelter.
- Many native shrubs provide nectar when they bloom (most in the spring), followed by berries, or other fruits, or nuts, in the summer into fall. Other native plants (think herbaceous perennials) provide nectar when blooming but then develop seeds which many birds feed on in the late summer, fall, and into winter.
- Homeowners should be encouraged to not cut back their perennials until spring since some seed heads persist into early winter (providing food for birds) and stems provide overwintering sites for insects.
- Planting in layers (tree canopy, understory or shrub layer including herbaceous plants, and ground cover) provides shelter, breeding, or nesting areas for wildlife.

#### Pollinators:

- To encourage native bees or other pollinators, plant different species of perennials that bloom in different seasons so nectar is available from spring through fall. Plant flowers in clumps or drifts rather than one or two of each and use plants that have different colors and flower shapes.
- Hummingbirds will also visit flowers with tubular shapes. Here is a link to general information to keep in mind for gardening for pollinators: <https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/gardening.shtml> and a brochure that homeowners can print: [https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/documents/AttractingPollinatorsEasternUS\\_V1.pdf](https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/documents/AttractingPollinatorsEasternUS_V1.pdf) [note, these 2 links are not included on the resources list that is include in the Bay-wise packet, so there are additional resources for those homeowners who are very interested in gardening for pollinators]
- If you enjoy watching birds, using feeders is a great way to bring birds closer for observation. Be sure to place feeders either closer than three feet to a picture window (or even affixed to the glass or window frame), or farther than thirty feet from a window to avoid collisions. Periodically clean the feeders.
- Black oil sunflower is a good all-around food to provide as it contains good fat and protein content for birds, particularly in the winter.
- For hummingbirds, in addition to planting perennials with red, yellow, or blue tubular flowers, homeowners may wish to include a hummingbird feeder in their yard. Fill feeders with a mixture of one part sugar (can use regular sugar from the grocery store) to four parts water (use warm water to better dissolve the sugar). There is no need to use more expensive commercially-produced hummingbird nectar that is dyed red. If the sugar water becomes cloudy in the feeder, it is time to replace it with fresh. There are a number of different feeders

available. Be sure to use one that does not drip, and use an ant guard (filled with water) to prevent ants from entering the feeder.

Shelter:

- Planting shrubs and ground covers provides shelter to birds and reptiles from their predators.
- Birds may also nest in shrubs (e.g. northern cardinals) and box turtles will use ground covers as shelter.
- In addition, if a homeowner has room on their property, they can include evergreen trees, such as hollies or conifers, such as eastern red cedar, that provide shelter during the winter. Hollies and cedars also have the added benefit of providing berries in the winter, a time when food resources may be in short supply.
- Establishing a brush pile using fallen branches, away from the house, is another way to provide shelter for birds and other animals.
- Homeowners may also want to provide nest boxes for birds. Boxes placed on posts or poles must have predator guards to prevent snakes and raccoons from predated nests. A general fact sheet on nest boxes for bluebirds: <http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/PDF/NABS%20factsheet%20-%20Nestbox%20Recs.pdf>

Water:

The third primary need for wildlife is water.

- If the homeowner does not live near water, then a birdbath can provide needed water.
- During the summer, water should be changed every few days to discourage mosquito breeding.
- Adding a small pond is also a great way to provide water but also a home for frogs.
- Providing ice-free water in winter via a heated birdbath is also especially helpful to birds when natural ice-free water sources are unavailable; there are a number of heated birdbaths on the market.

### **Protect the Waterfront:**

This section is for HO who live in the Critical Area; however, you may want to go over it with those who are not in the Critical Area. For example, if they have steep slopes, they could use the first suggestion by maintaining plantings on a hillside or slope to help retain soil and avoid mowing. If you know the home is in the Critical Area, take a copy of the Critical Area brochure:

<https://www.co.cal.md.us/DocumentCenter/View/1322/CA-Critical-Area-Flyer-2009?bidId=> and <https://www.co.cal.md.us/DocumentCenter/View/4339/Maintaining-Your-Buffer?bidId=>

Familiarize yourself with native grasses. Show the Roots Graphic.

Do not fertilize within 15 feet of the waterway, and preferably, have a planted buffer.

Keep grass clippings, all yard, and other waste out of the waterway where it may decay and add nutrients to the water that support algae.

Make sure the homeowner is aware of the Critical Area Reforestation program and encourage them to apply free trees/shrubs on their property. These are provided and planted by Calvert County and the homeowner must agree to maintain them. This is the application form:

<https://www.co.cal.md.us/DocumentCenter/View/1399/CA-Reforestation-Application-Fillable-PDF?bidId=> .

Following is the list of trees/shrubs that area available through the program:

<http://www.co.cal.md.us/DocumentCenter/View/251/Native-Plants-Feb-2011?bidId=>

### **Manage Pests IPM: Integrated Pest Management (IPM):**

- Focuses on pest prevention.

- Uses pesticides only as needed as last step.

This provides a more effective, environmentally sensitive approach. The introduction to the IPM section of the yardstick has some good general information but here are the basic steps of IPM in order of implementation:

- 1) Figure out how much plant damage you will tolerate.
- 2) Identify and monitor pests – Not all insects, weeds, and other living organisms require control. Many organisms are innocuous, and some are even beneficial. This monitoring and identification removes the possibility that pesticides will be used when they are not really needed or that the wrong kind of pesticide will be used.
- 3) Prevent problems using cultural or mechanical practices or methods such as rotating between different crops, selecting pest-resistant varieties, or planting pest-free rootstock. Other practices can eliminate problems or keep them from getting worse: cutting out diseased portions of plants and disposing of them properly (do not compost), handpicking pest insects (use gloves if desired), hand weeding or clipping smaller swaths of invasive plants repeatedly at the base of the plant.
- 4) Control (last resort) – use the least toxic chemical first. Effective, less risky pest controls are chosen first, including highly targeted chemicals, such as pheromones to disrupt pest mating, or mechanical control, such as trapping or weeding. If further monitoring, identification, and action thresholds indicate that less risky controls are not working, then additional pest control methods could be employed, such as targeted spraying of pesticides. We would not recommend broadcast spraying of non-specific pesticides as this is harmful to beneficial insects and could lead to secondary harm to birds and other wildlife

#### **Invasive Plants:**

Invasive plants in wetland: If HO wants to try to control invasive plants in a wetland situation such as phragmites using herbicides, they should contact an entity that is licensed to use herbicides designed for aquatic environments. There are other mechanical methods to control phragmites, but these take effort that the HO may find difficult to implement (chopping down the phragmites with heavy-duty weed whipper and covering with 6-mil. plastic and leaving for a year. This method requires wading into the marsh, which HO may not want to tackle). MD Department of Natural Resources - information on controlling phragmites: [http://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants\\_wildlife/Phragmites.aspx](http://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants_wildlife/Phragmites.aspx) .

Controlling other invasive plants: There are several websites listed on the resource list to share with HO's that have invasive plants. "Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas" includes control methods for specific invasive plants. The first recommendation for tackling invasive plant problems is to use hand pulling if possible. Plants such as Japanese stilt grass can easily be hand pulled, or weed wacked frequently to prevent seeding (this is an annual grass). Other plants, such as bamboo, require much more work to eliminate from a yard. For English ivy growing on trees, cut all around the tree trunk about a foot above ground and then cut the ivy around the trunk another foot above the first cut. This will kill the vine growing into the tree – you do not want to pull it off the tree as it will pull off the tree bark. You can then pull the ivy from the ground, so it will not re-sprout.