

# PLANT MORE PLANTS

## Fact Sheet

### How our Actions Impact the Health of the Bay

A watershed is an area of land that drains to a particular river, lake, bay or other body of water. Everyone in the world lives in a specific watershed. All of us. In the Bay region, most people in Maryland, Virginia and central Pennsylvania live in the Bay watershed, meaning their land drains into local rivers and streams and ultimately into the Chesapeake Bay. Residents of the West Virginia panhandle, parts of New York and Delaware, and everyone in Washington, D.C. are in the Chesapeake watershed, too. Because of the vast population in this region, the actions taken on land have a significant effect on everyone's local waterways.

It is no surprise to most people that the Bay's water quality is considered poor. This is largely due to pollution from excess nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment. These chemicals promote excess algae growth, which consumes oxygen and makes waters hard to live in for crabs, fish and all of the Bay's creatures. Additionally, algae blocks the sunlight needed for underwater grasses to grow – these grasses are vital hiding places for juvenile species.

Each spring, the rainstorms our lawns and gardens crave also wash excess fertilizer and dirt off the region's suburban lawns and landscapes. These nutrient-rich pollutants, in addition to others like gasoline, used oil, pesticides, pet waste, and litter, travel along hard surfaces like streets and sidewalks on a direct path into our streams and rivers – and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. Once there, the fertilizers designed to make our lawns green fuel growth of excess algae, degrade water quality and limit the livelihood of the Bay's underwater life.

#### How will planting more plants impact the Bay?

While we cannot control the amount of rain and runoff that brings pollution to the Bay, we have the ability to limit how much fertilizer and dirt enters the ecosystem in the first place by controlling what's in our yards. Trees, shrubs, plants and grasses have expansive root systems that hold soil in place (which reduces erosion) and act as natural filters of runoff. Natural landscapes reduce the quantity of stormwater runoff by acting as filters of excess fertilizers, pesticides and spilled fuels from power equipment.

#### The importance of native plants.

Using plants that are native to your region are of even greater benefit since they are specifically adapted to the weather conditions there. This means that they can thrive with less watering (even in droughts), less maintenance and less (or even no) fertilizer or pesticide. Even better, native landscapes provide necessary food and shelter for local butterflies, birds and other beneficial creatures. In many cases, these creatures cannot adapt to imported plants in our landscapes; instead, they thrive and survive on trees, shrubs and flowers that have grown in the Bay region for generations.

To learn about conservation landscaping and how to help improve the Chesapeake Bay starting in your own backyard, visit [www.PlantMorePlants.com](http://www.PlantMorePlants.com).



*The Chesapeake Bay Program is a unique regional partnership that has coordinated the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed since 1983. "Plant More Plants" is the second personal stewardship campaign created by Bay Program partners under the umbrella of The Chesapeake Club. This campaign, along with the earlier "Save the Crabs then Eat 'Em" campaign, strives to share with residential homeowners practices that are beneficial to their lifestyle and to the Chesapeake Bay. The Chesapeake Club campaigns are brought to you by the individuals from the following organizations and localities: **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Turfgrass Council, Chesapeake Bay Program, Chesterfield County, Henrico County, Hanover County, the City of Richmond, HR STORM, District of Columbia Department of the Environment, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Maryland Department of the Environment.***