PLANT MORE PLANTS

Plant More Plants Backgrounder
Program Overview

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the United States, approximately 200 miles long, extending from Havre de Grace, Maryland, to Virginia Beach, Virginia. It is fed by rivers and streams in a 64,000 square mile watershed that stretches from upstate New York to Southern Virginia. It is a complex ecosystem composed of important habitats and food webs. The Bay and its rivers, wetlands and forests provide homes, food and protection for diverse groups of animals and plants.

Each spring, rain storms wash pollutants from hundreds of thousands of urban landscapes and suburban lawns into our streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. Once in our waterways, chemicals designed to make our lawns green fuel the growth of excess algae, which threatens the health of underwater Bay life and our ecosystem.

Water quality is the most important measure of the Chesapeake Bay's health. Unfortunately, the health of the Chesapeake Bay is in jeopardy, as a result of pollutants including those from storm water runoff. Water quality in the Bay remains extremely poor because of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution. To improve water quality, the flow of pollution must be reduced.

Plant More Plants, a personal stewardship campaign by the Chesapeake Bay Program, aims to encourage residential homeowners to take on behaviors that improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay by reducing the harmful effects of storm water runoff – the fastest growing source of pollution – from urban and suburban land. Homeowners in the Hampton Roads and Richmond areas of Virginia, Washington D.C. metropolitan area and Baltimore are encouraged to adopt conservation gardening and lawn care practices that ultimately mitigate harmful pollutants and improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay.

The message to homeowners is simple and encourages a behavior they are already predisposed to do – Grow some good. Plant more plants. Not only do plants make yards more beautiful, but because they also filter storm water runoff, the Chesapeake Bay becomes healthier and more beautiful too.

Plant More Plants encourages consumers to plant native plants to help conserve the Bay's natural resources. Plants native to the Bay area are adapted to the region's soil, climate and pests, therefore requiring less water, fertilizer, pesticides and overall maintenance. Native plants are also the best source of food and shelter for wildlife.

Natural landscapes reduce the quantity and improve the quality of storm water runoff. Native plants absorb storm water and act as filters that reduce the harmful effects of fertilizers, pesticides, pet waste and spilled fuels from power equipment. Plant roots grip soil and reduce erosion from storm water runoff. Native species planted on slopes along water bodies and drainage ditches help to prevent erosion and pollution by stabilizing the soil and slowing the flow of rainwater runoff.

To learn about conservation landscaping and how to help improve the Chesapeake Bay starting in your own backyard, visit **www.PlantMorePlants.com**.