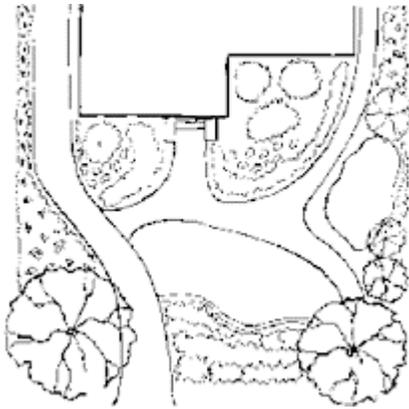


BayScaping for the Long Term - A Homeowner's Guide

BayScapes are environmentally sound landscapes benefiting people, wildlife and Chesapeake Bay. BayScaping advocates a "holistic" approach through principles inspired by the relationships found in the natural world.



- Why is long-term planning so important for my home landscape?
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Why is long-term planning so important for my home landscape?

Most of us don't realize how daily landscape maintenance decisions affect the surrounding environment. The impacts of landscape decisions reach far beyond individual property lines, however. In reality, such decisions affect our neighbors, area wildlife and the natural resources found throughout surrounding communities. By planning the management of our home landscapes over the long term with these concerns in mind, each of us can make a positive contribution to Chesapeake Bay, to fish and wildlife habitats and to the quality of our own lives.

Americans manage 30 million acres of lawn in the United States and,

according to the Environmental Protection Agency, use approximately 100 million tons of fertilizer and more than 80 million pounds of pesticides each year. We spend \$750 million on grass seed and use 10 times the rate-per-acre of pesticides used by farmers. Grass clippings consume an estimated 25 to 40 percent of landfill space during the course of the growing season in many U.S. suburban communities. And these numbers are on the rise. In the Chesapeake Bay region alone, anticipated population growth of approximately 20 percent for the watershed in the next 25 years will mean 3 million new residents. An additional 750,000 acres of farm and forest land will be converted to residential housing to accommodate more people.

Obviously, mismanagement of residential land and, specifically, the imprudent use of fertilizers and pesticides can quickly add up to very big problems. Problems include fertilizers and pesticides entering local creeks and streams, possible contamination of groundwater, air and noise pollution from gasoline-powered machinery, and health risks associated with the use of landscape chemicals. Through the process of long-term planning, we can reduce the need for unnecessary chemicals and create landscapes that require less money and time to maintain.

Doesn't long-term planning require the services of a landscape professional?

No. There may be circumstances where you will want the advice of a landscape architect or landscape planner, such as when you are building a new home or when you undertake designing a challenging site. In such cases, the expert knowledge and opinion of a landscape professional is often indispensable. However, we can all participate in long-term planning for landscape management. For the most part, it translates to looking at the big

picture, or thinking ahead to the landscape that you want 5, 10 or even 20 years from now. Ask yourself some of these questions:

- How much grass do I want to mow during the next 15 or 20 years? How much grass do I really need for the way I use my yard?
- How do I feel about pruning and trimming shrubbery over the long term? (Can I afford to have someone else do it for me indefinitely?)
- Can I afford to water my lawn during droughts or during times of water restriction, given its current size?
- Am I willing to drag and move water hoses and sprinklers from place to place now and in the future?
- Is my landscape going to mature into an outdoor living room?

After asking these questions, it will be easier to envision a landscape designed and created to meet your needs, expectations, budget and time. With some careful thought you can incorporate many of the BayScapes principles and create a beautiful, as well as environmentally sound, landscape.

What is the planning process; how do I begin?

Environmentally sound, livable landscapes benefiting local waters and Chesapeake Bay can be achieved by following a four-step process:

- analyze site potential
- organize a functional landscape
- select trees, plants and ground covers for both landscape and wildlife benefits
- determine real or hidden maintenance costs

This process can be used whether you live in a townhouse, a semi-detached house or a single family residence. Remember that the creation, use and care of a landscape constantly evolves as your lifestyle changes. And unlike an artificial environment, a natural landscape continues to grow, mature, die and give new life. Landscape plans must be flexible to accommodate change over time.

The planning process, step by step

Step one: analyze your site for landscape potential.

This step involves taking a comprehensive inventory. To understand the characteristics of your property, you need to study the building blocks of the land. These include soil composition, site exposure, existing trees and plants, drainage, and possibly an existing septic field. Consider natural conditions, such as the amount of sunlight throughout the day, seasonal wind direction and average rainfall. Your local Cooperative Extension Service office can provide you with information on local climate conditions (such as average first frost dates and coldest winter temperatures), seasonal wind patterns and severity, and precipitation trends. This will be especially useful if you are planning flower and vegetable gardens.

You also need to consider the built, or artificial, elements including the buildings, walls, fences, paving, steps, utilities, entrances and views (in and out). Be attentive to property lines and get a copy of your plat if boundaries are unclear. Use the action guide insert of this publication to review existing site conditions as you plan your landscape.

If you have recently moved into a new or existing home, it may take a year to study your site conditions and gather the information needed to plan your landscape for the long term. You may also discover after spending time in your new home that you have screening needs or drainage problems that were not at first apparent.

Step two: organize a functional landscape to meet your needs.

Develop a plan for your landscape that meets the many needs of your household. Household members should work on this as a group, prioritizing each possible use and agreeing to a plan for different areas of your property. Try using graph paper to sketch out existing buildings, trees and plants that will form the basis for your ultimate, finished look. Then use several sheets of tracing paper to sketch potential area uses and to explore how such uses best fit existing structures, foot traffic and specific needs of family members, including pets.

The agreed-upon plan should list desired area uses-such as sitting and entertaining, growing vegetables or flowers, play, or storage-in order of importance. The size of each area can be readily determined based on the number of people using it, their interest level and the space available. Use the checklist on the action guide insert of this publication to help you evaluate items to consider.

Now write down the requirements for each element. For example, a vegetable garden needs good soil, near-flat land, sun and protection from wind and wildlife. An outdoor dining space works best with a flat, solid surface, some shade, some sun, proximity to the kitchen and privacy. A play area requires good lawn grass and, depending on the children's ages, a fence and play equipment. Consider the need to build fences or privacy screens before finalizing your plan.

Step three: select trees, shrubs and ground covers for landscape and wildlife benefits.

Now the fun part begins! Think of your property as a room, or better, a series of rooms. The paving, lawn and ground covers represent the flooring; the fences, walls, hedges or planted screens form the landscape walls. Trees, trellises, arbors and the sky form the ceiling. Furnishings for your outdoor living room include benches, lawn furniture, lights and sculptures.

Define the sizes of the garden rooms you sketch to reveal where plants and trees are required and permitted. Color can be used dramatically in hues of red, orange and yellow, or more subtly with earth tones such as browns, tans and warm grays.

Consider the potential variety of evergreen plants available for screens and windbreaks and deciduous plants or perhaps a trellis for shading a living room during the summer. Choose trees and plants according to seasonal bloom and color; increase some of your personal favorites as well as plants new to you. Now that you have the basic elements established, it may be useful to bring in a nursery expert and seek his or her advice. A trip to a nearby nursery with

your plan in hand is a wonderful way to move forward. Take your time when selecting plants. Explore the possibility of using some native trees and shrubs. In addition to their beauty, they offer special attributes (such as significantly lower requirements for water, fertilizers, or pesticides).

Finally, remember to provide for backyard wildlife as you make your selections. Animals need food, water, cover for nesting and hiding, and a toxin-free home. Many natives are excellent for providing these wildlife needs.

Step four: determine real or hidden costs associated with long-term maintenance.

The final step in the long-term planning process will be to evaluate the costs in maintaining your home landscape. In this evaluation, review your proposed plan for opportunities to save both time and money. Long-term maintenance requirements may play the single most important role in making final decisions on a landscape plan. A complex and costly plan often leads to an abandoned landscape that seemed like such a good idea at first. Remember, there is no such thing as a maintenance-free landscape. It simply does not exist. However, a focus on reducing maintenance will provide a plan that makes sense for you and your budget.



Simple ideas that can help you achieve a manageable landscape

- Limit high-maintenance turf to a functional minimum. While it serves as a sturdy and soft ground cover for play areas, it requires regular mowing, watering, fertilizing, weed control and periodic disposal of grass clippings.

And, with it comes the use and maintenance of a long list of equipment, such as mowers, trimmers, fertilizer spreaders, sprayers and watering devices.

- Maintain an overall casual, as opposed to formal, appearance. Consider the attributes and architectural style of your house as you plan your landscape. An informal arrangement of plantings and grasses complements many house designs as well as the practical demands of children and pets. A casual design will provide a softer textural element that blends in with your house design instead of detracting from it.
- Avoid labor-intensive, manicured hedge screens. Instead, try a border of tall, native grasses against a wood or metal fence. Evergreen hollies and certain species of deciduous viburnum also provide screening without the need for frequent pruning.
- Use plant and tree species native to the Chesapeake Bay watershed as much as possible; avoid exotic, high-maintenance species. Natives require fewer inputs of water and fertilizers and adapt well to local climate conditions without taking over other vegetation.
- Prune interfering, damaged or diseased branches. You may even need to remove existing shrubs and trees to let in additional light or make room for adjacent plantings.
- Size vegetable or flower gardens to realistically fit available space and needs. Don't create a management monster. Consider local climate conditions before siting any garden area.
- Use tall grasses and ground covers on slopes. They will not only reduce your maintenance burden, but are superior for slowing down surface water velocity and reducing potential runoff during storm events.
- Encourage some areas to remain woody in character. Wooded areas offer beauty and natural ecology lessons for kids of all ages. Check the BayScapes Beneficial Plants list for ground covers that perform well in shady locations.
- Practice Integrated Pest Management diligently. This is a necessary first step toward achieving an ecologically balanced landscape that will attract wildlife.
- Reduce ornamental annual use; adopt perennials for seasonal color. They offer savings in time and expense and, once established, generally require fewer inputs of fertilizers and water.

Special consideration areas

Woodland wildflowers offer great beauty and enjoyment but require special maintenance for long-term success. The basic maintenance tasks, in addition to proper soil preparation, plant selection and installation, include periodic thinning of the canopy to permit adequate light, addition of leaf mulch to assure adequate soil build-up, restricted traffic from people and pets to prevent

compaction or breakage, and removal of competitive, invasive species.

Wildflowers in a wooded area will reward you with butterflies and songbirds, as well as colorful patches to enjoy nature's solitude.

Marsh and wetland plantings similarly require restricted foot traffic to prevent compaction, replanting on occasion with native species and periodic removal of any invasive plants. Marshes and ponds introduce extraordinary sights and sounds uncommon to the typical residential property. Should you have the benefit of a marsh or pond nearby, you will delight in a wide range of wildlife species, including fish, amphibians, small mammals and waterfowl.

Whether you opt for a formal or more casual look, think of your home landscape as an artistic expression. Like any work of art, it should contain basic design elements: balance, contrast and unity. Achieving a beautiful composition involves mixing contours, colors, tone and texture in a balanced way throughout the landscape. Contrasting colors and textures will give your landscape interesting movement and focal points. Unity may be achieved through the repetition of an element or elements-perhaps a favorite perennial. When planning different use areas and planting new vegetation, keep in mind the ultimate size and spread of what you plant. While it can be a delight to incorporate a diversity of new plant species into your yard, small mass-plantings of fewer varieties often create a more unifying theme than many varieties of individual plants. Drive around your neighborhood and surrounding communities to get ideas and to confirm which plants do well in your location. Finally, do not attempt to naturalize your landscape all at once. The replacement process can be overwhelming. Make a long-term plan to introduce new materials and ideas into your landscape, one section at a time, as opportunities present themselves. BayScaping, when approached at your own pace, can be a creative and rewarding experience.

A well-designed landscape incorporates each of the BayScapes principles while meeting the functional needs of the household. It includes native plantings and low-maintenance areas wherever possible, minimizing the need

for supplemental water and chemicals with the potential to pollute surface and ground water supplies. It provides cover and food for wildlife and, through the tenets of Integrated Pest Management, returns natural pest control mechanisms to the landscape. Such landscapes represent a significant, tangible way for you to contribute to the health of local waterways and Chesapeake Bay.

Suggested reading list

- Clark, David E., ed. *Basic Gardening Illustrated*. Menlo Park, Calif.: Lane Publishing Company, 1975.
- Cravens, Richard H. *Vines*. Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1979.
- Kramer, Jack. *Hanging Gardens*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971.
- Countryside Books, eds. *Home Landscaping*. Barrington, IL: A. B. Morse Company, 1974.
- Verley, Rosemary. *Classic Garden Design*. New York: Congdon Weed, Inc., 1984.
- Pollan, Michael. *Second Nature*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1991.
- The Lawn Institute. *Redesigning the American Lawn*. Hartford, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993.
- Stein, Sara. *Noah's Garden*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.
- Springer, Lauren. *The Undaunted Garden: Planting for Weather-Resilient Beauty*. Fulcrum Publishing, 1994.
- Brooks, John. *The Country Garden*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1987.

For more information

For detailed specific instructions for the safe use of fertilizers and pesticides in your community, contact your local or area Cooperative Extension office. The Cooperative Extension is a service of the land-grant university systems in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

BayScapes is an environmental education initiative developed by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Chesapeake Bay Field Office.

For more information on BayScapes, contact:

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