

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Because of development and habitat destruction, pressures on wildlife populations are great. There is still time to reverse this alarming trend. Gardeners have the power to make a significant contribution toward sustaining biodiversity by restoring even a small part of our lawns with plants for wildlife.

GO NATIVE

- Native plants attract & nourish our native wildlife. They have evolved together to best serve each others' needs.
- Native plants tend to be hardy & easy to grow. (As with any plant, consider conditions of plant site location.)
- Don't forget that birds eat native insects. Stop & think before you spray pesticides or herbicides. Natives stay beautiful and in balance without pesticides.
- Diversity is important. Animal diversity is a direct result of plant diversity.

Popular Non-Native Plants to avoid: Bradford Pear and Norway Maple Trees; Burning Bush

To learn more, check out the Maryland Native Plant Society's website, www.mdflora.org and www.wildflower.org/alternatives/index.php

Recommended book – Bringing Nature Home, How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens by Douglas Tallamy

HGIC 1-800 342 2507; www.hgic.umd.edu
Cornell University Cooperative Extension, www.cce.cornell.edu

Focus on Fall

“For the first time in the history of the world, every human being is now subjected to contact with dangerous chemicals, from the moment of conception until death.”

Rachel Carson

Dorsey Hall Garden Club
Civic Project: Environmental Committee
No. 1

COMPOSTING

Choose a site near your kitchen/garden.

Bins can be recycled wooden pallets, wire mesh, plastic trashcans with holes punched in the sides, tumble units purchased from Home Depot.

Add a layer of nitrogen material of highly moist, usually green material such as grass clippings, veggies, fruits, coffee grounds with paper filters, tea bags, egg shells; cow, horse, sheep, rabbit manure; or seaweed.

Alternate with a layer of high carbon material, usually brown material such as dry leaves, peat moss, corn stalks & cobs, sawdust, woodchips, small shrub trimmings, shredded black & white newspapers & telephone books. Keep layers 50-50 & all pieces small. Too much nitrogen will stink. Too much carbon will decompose very slowly. Placing brown material over green will keep flies away.

DO NOT ADD dog or cat manure, meats, bones, oils, butter, eggs, dairy, weeds that have gone to seed, diseased plants, or plants treated with herbicides/ pesticides. These materials attract bugs and rodents.

Decomposition will be aided by keeping the pile damp, not soggy, and by turning the material over every 2-4 weeks because the bottom of the pile heats up and gets “done” first.

In six months, beautifully black, crumbly compost will add micro organisms that will break down organic material to create humus. This humus enhances the soil to hold on to nutrients and helps clay soils to drain more easily and sandy soils to retain water. Chemical

fertilizers will not be needed!!!

Add compost to existing or new garden soils, potted plants, trees and shrubs and/or use as mulch.

Recycle! Help the environment, & enjoy your garden!

FERTILIZE IN THE FALL OR NOT AT ALL

Wait until 10 days after average temperature is 50 degrees or below.

Avoid over-fertilizing plants. It can lead to pest problems and nutrients from the fertilizer escape to ground water.

- **Nitrogen** converts to nitrate and is lost in the soil water or by erosion in the soil organic matter, causing problems in ground water and surface waters.

- **Phosphorus** can be lost by surface runoff and erosion.

The most effective method to decrease polluting is to add only the amount of nutrients needed, using the most efficient method for plant uptake. Test soil every 3 years. You may not need to fertilize.

For lawns:

- **Add slow release nitrogen** for grass growth—a single application in fall about two weeks after the last mowing is sufficient for the entire year.

- **Water** your lawn ¼ to ½ inch after spreading fertilizer to get the material into the ground where it can be used by plants.

- **Apply with care.** Use a drop spreader to place the fertilizer exactly where it is needed. Use care loading spreaders. Sweep up spills before they become a pollution problem.

For gardens:

- **Work** organic compost into soil.

- **Till the soil** in established gardens to disrupt pest habitats. Over winter, the habitats will be destroyed.

- **Improve** the soil for new gardens in the fall. Kill the sod with organic or plastic mulch. Work in three to six inches of organic matter.

Don't be too neat with fall cleanup. Birds feed on seed heads. Butterflies and beneficial insects may overwinter in the garden debris. Dispose of diseased vegetation.