YARDSCAPING...
FOR A HEALTHY MAINE

Presented by Mary Wicklund
YardScaping Workshop Agenda

• Brief History of the Program
• Why do lawns matter for water quality?
• Steps for safe and healthy lawns
• Non-lawn options
• Questions
YardScaping

• A new way to think about your yard

• Some call it “Sustainable Landscaping” or “Ecological Landscaping”

• Simple steps we all can take
Runoff Changes with Development

Natural Cover

75-100% Impervious Surface

10% 50% 40% 10% 55% 30% 15%
Urban streams

- Insecticides occurred more frequently than in agricultural area streams
- Herbicides detected in 99% of samples
- Phosphorous at same levels as in agricultural streams
Pounds of Home Use Pesticides Distributed into Maine

Includes lawn and tree care company applications
The Maine YardScaping Partnership

- Allen, Sterling & Lothrop
- Bar Mills Ecological
- Carroll Associates, Landscape Architects
- City of Portland
- Congress of Lake Associations
- Edwards & Kelcey
- Friends of Casco Bay
- Friends of Scarborough Marsh
- Kennebunkport Conservation Commission
- LakeSmart Program
- Lisa Cowan Landscape Architecture
- Maine Board of Pesticides Control
- Maine Department of Agriculture
- Maine Department of Environmental Protection
- Maine Landscape/Nursery Association
- Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association
- Maine Society of Landscape Architects
- Maine Storm Water Groups
- Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- O’Donal’s Nurseries
- Shaw Brothers Construction
- Skillin’s Greenhouses
- Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- Southern Maine Community College
- State Planning Office
- Think Blue Maine Program
- Town of Brunswick
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension

Includes Towns of Kittery, Eliot, S. Berwick, Berwick and York, Maine (regulated for stormwater runoff)
YardScaping Mission

To inspire Maine people to:

• create and maintain healthy landscapes
• through ecologically based practices that
• minimize reliance on water, fertilizer and pesticides
Proper use of fertilizers and pesticides help protect our waters.

Keep it:
- Off the roads
- Off the sidewalk
- Out of the catch basins
6 Steps of Common Sense Lawn Care

#1 Mow Better

#2 Let the Clippings Lie

#3 Fertilize?

#4 Got Weeds?

#5 Got Bugs?

#6 Water Wisely

Make a healthy, beautiful yard... without working too hard!
“Challenge” Areas are Inevitable

... but what is the ultimate goal?
Remember ...
Stress free lawns need much less care – less fertilizer and less pest control.
Step #1 - Mow Better

- Cut high (3-4 inches)
- Don’t remove more than 1/3\textsuperscript{rd} the blade of grass
- Sharp mower blades = clean cut (minimize disease)
- Vary mowing pattern to minimize compaction
- Mow when dry & leave clippings (adds lots of nitrogen)
Step #2 – Let the Clippings Lie

- Lawns that are more than 10 years old typically only need clippings

- Lawns that are less than 10 years old may need nitrogen (get a soil test first!)
Step #3 - Fertilize (in the fall... if at all!)

Best to do in fall (early Sept.) when soil temps are warm and grass roots have the highest absorption rate
But First                Test your Soil

You don’t know what your lawn needs unless you test it first!
Topdress with Compost
*(the best fertilizer!)*

Top dress with 1/8 - 1/4 inch of compost

- Reduces need for synthetic fertilizers
- Improves nutrient and water holding capacity
- Helps root development

Compost tea

- Can be applied anytime
Step #4 – Got Weeds?

Healthy soil, with dense, tall turf tends to reduce weed invasion

Mow High – shades out weeds

Hand weed (tolerance!)

Aerate

Overseed
  • Yardscaping mix
  • No Mow Mix
  • Clover

(Spot treatment only when necessary)
Redefine “Weeds”

Clover

✓ Nitrogen source
✓ Outcompetes weeds
✓ Fills in where grass struggles
✓ Less mowing!
Aerate and Overseed

- **Before**: Thatch layer
  - Shallow roots
  - Compacted hard soil
  - Compacted soil actually helps thatch layer develop

- **Immediately Following**: Water
  - Nutrients
  - Cores

- **8-10 Weeks Following**: New deeper roots develop
  - New grass plants increase lawn’s density
Weeds are the **RESULT** of a poor turf, not the **CAUSE** of a poor turf.
Step #5 – Got Bugs?

Identify the pest and monitor the progress – know the good bugs!

Pick it, trap it, exclude and select biological controls if available (e.g., parasitic nematodes).

Grubs – tolerate if less than 10 per square foot
Healthy Soil = Healthy Plants = Fewer Pests
Think Twice Before Using Pesticides

Healthy Soil = Healthy Plants = Fewer Pests

Start with Prevention – avoid a “Lawn on Drugs!”
✓ Pest resistant plants
✓ Healthy soil
✓ Right conditions

Identify the pest and condition before spraying

Try low impact/risk solutions first

Be extra careful with lawns – play area!
Step #6 – Water Wisely

• Allow water to soak into soil and avoid runoff

• Water in early morning

• AVOID mid-day watering = more evaporation and evapotranspiration

• AVOID evening watering = increased fungal growth
Step #6 – Water Wisely

Grass only needs 1 - 1.5” per week May to October (Buy a rain gauge).

Deep, infrequent watering.

Know your soil type.

Allow to go dormant during dry spells of summer.
Consider... Reducing Lawn Area

- Reduces
  - Water & air pollution
  - Water usage
  - Maintenance
  - Costs

- Gives
  - More free time!
  - Increased biodiversity

Mower exhaust = 11 small cars’ exhaust
Right Plant, Right Place

Use Diversity of Plants

Less noticeable damage from pests and disease

Incorporate many layers of plant types

✓ Trees
✓ Shrubs
✓ Ground covers
✓ Perennials

....and Lawn
Invasive vs. Native

Burning Bush

Vaccinium corymbosum

Japanese Barberry
Figure 1. Native plants support insects, which in turn support birds and other animals. More caterpillars in your yard might sound alarming, but most of those caterpillars are eaten by nesting birds, and many become pollinators.

Compared to ‘traditional’ landscaping, native landscaping supports:

- **50% higher abundance of native birds**
- **9x higher abundance of rare birds**
- **3x more butterfly species**
- **2x higher abundance of native bees**
Wildlife Habitats

- Add nectar and fruit producing plants
- Strive for continuous blooms
- Add water, walls, feeders, woody debris
Reduce Runoff & Encourage Infiltration

Remember every home near a storm drain or ditch = waterfront property

- Reduce amount of impervious (hard) surfaces
- Collect roof runoff in rain barrels
- Direct water into vegetated areas
- Create a rain garden

Rain garden in Leominster, MA
(Photo Credit - MA Watershed Coalition)
Stabilized Pathways
Go WILD with it!

Thanks to Gale Turner from Kittery.
A few local sources....
YOU Can Yardscape!

Remember...

YardScaping = Low Impact Gardening

✓ Mix of Lawn and Non-Lawn
✓ Use 6 Common Sense Steps for Lawns
✓ Use native species for non-lawn
✓ Right plant in the right place (sun/shade and wet/dry considerations)
✓ Tolerance (for bugs and weeds)

Saves you time, $, and is good for us all!
Thank You!

Yardscaping.org
ThinkBlueMaine.org
Southern Maine Stormwater Working Group