Conservation Landscapes and Garden Goals

Score Four: Students, Schools, Streams, and the Bay

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What is a Conservation Landscape?

A garden or landscape that uses materials and methods to:

- Benefit the local environment.
- Provide pleasure and beauty for humans.
Conservation Garden Elements

Native Plants

**Definition**: A native plant is any plant that historically grew in the region.
Conservation Garden Elements

**Benefits** of native plants:

- Need less (or no) fertilizer.
- Need less (or no) pesticides.
- Have much deeper roots than turf grasses, increasing soil porosity.
- Provide habitat for native insects, birds, and other wildlife.
Conservation Garden Elements

Mulch

**Definition:**
A layer of shredded bark, grass clippings, leaves, hay, newspaper, or cardboard placed over the soil.

Mulch reduces the need for watering in this garden.
Conservation Garden Elements

**Benefits of mulch:**

- Maintains moisture in the soil.
- Maintains soil temperature.
- Reduces erosion by covering bare soil.
- Absorbs stormwater runoff.
- Adds nutrients and organic matter to soil as it decomposes.
- Directs foot traffic.
- Can enhance visual appeal.
- Reduces weeds.
Conservation Garden Elements

Compost

**Definition:**
Decomposed organic material, such as leaves, plants, fruit and vegetable scraps, and animal manure mixed into garden soil.
Conservation Garden Elements

**Benefits** of compost:

- Adds nutrients and beneficial microbes to the soil.
- Organic matter & microbes cause soil to form lumps (aggregates), increasing its porosity.
- Organic matter holds water in the soil.
Do’s & Don’ts of Conservation Landscapes

**DO** replace turf grass with a planned landscape that uses native trees, shrubs, and plants.

**DO** remove invasive species from the area.

**DO** pick plants that suit your site and your project goals.

**DO NOT** use commercial fertilizers or pesticides.

Ferns thrive in this shady backyard.
Conservation Garden Benefits Summary

- Helps control erosion and other runoff problems.
- Conserves water.
- Removes pollutants from stormwater runoff.
- Promotes healthy soils
- Provides habitat for wildlife.
- Reduces air pollution.
- Is managed to conserve energy, reduce waste, and eliminate or minimize the use of pesticides and fertilizers.
Part 2: Choosing Your Garden Goals

The **goals you choose** for your conservation landscape (or a different Stormwater Action Project) will influence its location, your plant choices, and other aspects of your project.
Your Number 1 Goal: Reduce Stormwater Runoff

Gardens to reduce the sediments and other pollutants in the Chesapeake Bay!
Other Possible Goals

A pollinator garden.

Attract bees and other pollinators with pesticide-free flowering plants.
Other Possible Goals

A butterfly garden.

Provide host plants needed by specific species to reproduce and survive.
Other Possible Goals

A bird “sanctuary”.

Attract many species with a variety of short and tall plants and shrubs that provide food, nesting sites, and protection.
Other Possible Goals

Plan to **support many types of wildlife** by using plants that attract insects that in turn attract ...

- Birds
- Reptiles
- Amphibians
- Mammals

What about water features for frogs and birds?
Other Possible Goals

Grow people food.
Other Possible Goals

Start an outdoor classroom.
Team and Class Discussions

- Are there other goals you want for your project?
- Which of the goals did you like the best and why?
- Before deciding on your project goals, discuss:
  - Can our goals be achieved in the site(s) we have selected?
  - Will these goals need to be accomplished in stages?
  - What resources are needed to achieve these goals? Do we have them?
  - How can the project be maintained?
  - Are there other factors that need to be considered?

If the answers to these questions are:

- “Yes” → start the planning process.
- “No” → your class needs to rethink your goals and possibly consider a different type of Stormwater Action Project.