

1 Respect property boundaries and buffer zones.

Mow only inside your property lines. Avoid mowing parkland or HOA common property. Most county parkland is left wild to preserve forest health and animal habitat.

If HOA common property appears overgrown, tell your HOA board or manager. They may change the mowing schedule, or they may have a good reason for not mowing. The land may be a protected stream buffer.



Stream Buffers

Stream buffers are forested areas bordering streams. They stabilize streambanks and protect water quality by holding soil in place and filtering pollutants from stormwater runoff.

Stream buffers are safeguarded Resource Protection Areas under the 1988 Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. No development or plant removal is allowed within 100 feet of the water without a permit.

Learn more about Resource Protection Areas and see them on a map at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/landdevelopment/faqs-resource-protection-areas

Watch the Green Grow is a Fairfax County Park Authority program to encourage green actions on private property. Record your achievements and learn more about easy green actions you can do at <http://bit.ly/WTGG>

- ✓ Scoop the poop
- ✓ Reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizer
- ✓ Grasscycle
- ✓ Reduce lawn area and plant native plants
- ✓ Remove invasive plants
- ✓ Fix erosion and bare spots
- ✓ Plant native trees
- ✓ Respect property boundaries
- ✓ Bag yard waste for proper disposal
- ✓ Ask your HOA or community association to plant native plants
- ✓ Tell a neighbor how they can Watch the Green Grow

Scan to access the
Watch the Green Grow website.



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To request this information in an alternate format, call Inclusion and ADA Support at 703-324-8563. TTY 711.

MOW LESS GROW MORE



Lawns are a common suburban feature, but they are a food desert to local insects and birds. Lawns are also a source of water pollution. Fertilizer and pesticides wash into streams and rivers during storms. We can protect water quality, create wildlife habitat, and reduce erosion and drainage problems. How? **Mow less, and grow more.**

3 WAYS TO MOW LESS AND GROW MORE

- 1 Respect property boundaries and buffer zones.
- 2 Mow high and let it lie.
- 3 Reduce your lawn area, and plant native plants.



2 Mow high and let it lie.

Lazy mowing is green mowing.

Two easy steps:

- Cut grass three inches high, or mow less frequently.
- Let the grass clippings lay where they fall.

Mow High

Take a “lazy lawnmower” approach to yard maintenance. Create habitat for bees and other pollinators. Researchers at UMass Amherst found that mowing lawns every two weeks improved bee habitats in suburban yards by allowing flowers to bloom. You can also set the lawnmower to cut grass three inches high to preserve clover and other small flowers that feed bees.



Don't mind weeds, they feed the bees

Weed-free lawns are a poor habitat for bees, butterflies and hummingbirds that need flower nectar for food, not grass. Don't use herbicide to eliminate every weed from your lawn. Appreciate violets, clover and even dandelions.

Let it Lie

Rather than bagging them, let grass clippings lie on the ground when you mow. Grasscycling returns nutrients to the lawn and reduces the need for fertilizer. To avoid clumping, mow when grass is dry or use a mulching blade.



Bees are friends, not foes

- Bees are important pollinators. Without them, we would be unable to grow much of our food.
- Honeybees are not the only bees important to agriculture. Some fruits and vegetables, like blueberries and tomatoes, can be pollinated only by bumblebees that vibrate flowers in a manner called “buzz pollination”.
- Bees are not aggressive. Honeybees will defend their hive if threatened, but most bees native to Virginia are solitary bees without a hive to protect. Male bees do not even have a stinger.
- People sometimes confuse bees with similar-looking wasps that can be more aggressive, like yellow jackets and European hornets. Yellow jackets are not as hairy as bees, and European hornets are larger than yellow jackets.

Skip the pesticides

Native plants are eaten by caterpillars and other animals. Don't poison the wildlife that eat your plants. When you buy plants from a garden center, ask if they have been treated with pesticides. Plants at native plant nurseries are grown without pesticides.

3 Reduce your lawn area, and plant native plants.

Native plants have several advantages over grass lawns:

- Plants native to this area are adapted to the climate and soil conditions. They do not need fertilizer or frequent watering.
- Native plants feed pollinators and other local wildlife. Butterflies, bees, birds and other animals evolved with native plants and depend on their nectar, fruit, seeds and leaves for food.
- Native plants can help solve landscaping problems like erosion and poor drainage.



Feed butterflies and birds with native plants

- Caterpillars are picky eaters. Each species depends on specific host plants for food.
- After metamorphosis, butterflies switch from eating leaves to drinking nectar. Native flowers tend to produce more nectar for butterflies, bees and hummingbirds than do non-native ornamental flowers.
- Not all caterpillars become butterflies—some feed the birds. Caterpillars are an important food source for many birds, especially when nesting. By feeding caterpillars, you also feed birds.
- Many birds also eat native plant berries and seeds, especially in fall and winter when food is scarce.

Native plants solve landscaping problems
Sometimes grass will not grow in a trouble spot, such as a shady hill or wet, muddy area. Fix erosion and drainage problems with native plants.

Fix Erosion

Native plants have deeper roots than turf grass and better hold on to soil. Grass often grows poorly in shade, but many native plants prefer shade. Choose native ferns or shrubs adapted to your soil and light conditions.

Find more soil erosion solutions and a list of recommended native plants from NVSWCD at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/soil-water-conservation/drainage-problem-protect-eroding-land

Fix Poor Drainage

Areas with poor drainage can become muddy messes. A well-designed rain garden helps water absorb into the soil faster and reduces flooding. Rain garden plants filter pollutants from water runoff before it enters streams. Native plants that tolerate periodic flooding and dry spells are great rain garden additions.

Find more information about native plants and landscaping solutions from Plant NOVA Natives at www.plantnovanatives.org

Small Yards

Why bother mowing a small yard? Plant a low-maintenance garden instead. Native sedges and groundcover are lawn alternatives that do not need to be mowed. Create pathways through the yard with stones or mulch.

