

## **Lake Barcroft Watershed-Friendly Garden Program**

### ***"Watershed Protection Begins in Your Backyard"***

## **Watershed-Friendly Garden Certification**

Protect the lake and make your property more **Watershed Friendly**. To Earn **Certificates for a Watershed Friendly Garden**, check off each item that applies to your garden. You may find that you already have some of these watershed friendly features in your garden and be part way to earning a certificate or award. During the upcoming year, we will be training Watershed Ambassadors to work with interested homeowners to help develop more watershed friendly gardens. We are here to help! Remember all storm drains in our Community go into our Lake!

To submit your garden for certification, simply check off all items that apply to your garden in each category. At least *two of the improvements should be in 2012 and completed as part of this certification process*. Take photos of your watershed friendly landscape garden features or write a very brief description and submit to: The Environmental Quality Committee, c/o Lake Barcroft Association, P.O. Box 1085, Falls Church, VA 22041. You may also download a Certification form from the LBA website under Environmental Quality (Watershed) and email the completed form and photos to [bwash99@verizon.net](mailto:bwash99@verizon.net)

### **I. WATER RUN-OFF CONTROL**

- A. Install 1 or more rain barrels to capture rainwater. Earn an extra point for each additional rain barrel by entering # of barrels. (Look for upcoming Rain Barrel workshop in Lake Barcroft)
- B. Replace some hardscape with permeable surfaces, e.g. stepping stones, pavers or bricks set in sand or stone dust, or decking – this allows rainwater to filter into the earth.
- C. Reduce lawn; ring the lawn with mixed borders and/or create islands in the lawn with native plantings for wildlife food and cover.
- D. Plant vegetated buffers in low areas, near storm water drains, and along the lake to filter and absorb runoff & slow volume and velocity of rainwater.
- E. Install a rain garden which will hold and filter rainwater. Be sure to avoid installing near trees. (You may need professional advice for this) <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/raingardenbk.pdf>
- F. Plant and mulch bare spots subject to erosion with groundcovers, grasses, or natural layers of dense vegetation; reseed bare spots in lawn. Use biologs or compost logs to terrace steep hills subject to erosion - this will slow runoff and build up soil.
- G. Improve soil by breaking up compacted soil and adding organic matter to improve infiltration and retention of runoff. Add compost or mulch to your garden each year to make the soil more water retentive. Compost or free leaf mulch at Beach 2 is one of the best mulches & soil amendments.
- H. Install a green roof on a small structure or area for the ultimate green effort (seek professional advice)
- I. Direct downspouts away from driveways and other hardscape and into vegetated areas to filter and slow runoff. Keep flow away from house foundations.
- J. Dispose of oil, pesticides, and toxic chemicals properly. Do not dump anything into storm drains.
- K. Do not use coal-tar based sealants on your driveway. These contain highly toxic chemicals known to be harmful to humans and aquatic life. Rainwater washes toxic particles down storm drains and into the lake.

### **II. PLANTS**

- A. Preserve your trees: protect roots from compaction, water during drought, use a certified professional arborist that follows correct pruning.
- B. Plant one or more trees, preferably native, as a tree can absorb 500 gallons of rainwater plus slow the velocity and the volume of rainwater and prevent erosion.
- C. Increase number and diversity of native plants to support wildlife, plant in layers to slow rainfall and absorb runoff. Native plants typically need little maintenance, watering or pesticides - <http://www.nps.gov/plants/pubs/chesapeake/>
- D. Reduce or eliminate invasive plants which do not support wildlife and can take over - [http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural\\_heritage/invspdflist.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/invspdflist.shtml)

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- \_\_\_\_\_ E. Plan to plant and mulch after you dig or disturb any soil. Use straw bales or silt fences to prevent erosion during soil disturbing activities. **Note:** Remember that land within 100' of the lake is likely to be in a *Resource Protection Area (RPA)* and you may need a permit to disturb significant areas of soil. Please check the RPA guidelines at [www.lakebarcroft.org](http://www.lakebarcroft.org)

### III. LAWNS

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Reduce total lawn area because grass allows very little rainwater to be absorbed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. Replace lawn with border gardens including native plants for wildlife value and to filter and absorb water. Or try native groundcovers like ferns, Allegheny Spurge or wild ginger.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. Follow watershed friendly lawn care practices outlined in the following brochure, e.g. <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/newsletter/falllawncare.htm> Be sure your lawn company follows these practices; see also LBA-WID Fertilizer Guidelines: LBA Newsletter, March 2012
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. Better yet, feed your soil; not the lake. Use a mulching mower & leave your lawn clippings to decompose; this will add one lb of nitrogen to your lawn; add 1/2" or more of compost or leaf mold to your lawn and garden each year; your lawn will thrive & so will the lake.
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. Use low-mow hard fescue grass seed such as Eco-Lawn or Buffalo grass that have deep roots & rarely need mowing, or use lawn alternatives such as sedges, moss or other groundcovers because these will allow more rain to be absorbed into the earth & require little watering, fertilizing, mowing. Find out more at: <http://www.greenyour.com/home/lawn-garden/lawn/tips/plant-a-low-mow-grass-or-lawn/alternative>
- \_\_\_\_\_ F. Consistently pick up dog wastes on your lawn and on your walks.

### G. IV. OUTREACH

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Agree to host an open garden for a watershed friendly tour event.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. Agree to allow residents interested in change to visit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. Agree to become a Watershed Garden Ambassador.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. Volunteer to help with Watershed Grant projects.
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. Blog about your watershed friendly garden on the Lake Barcroft blog.

### Certification Levels:

As you make your garden more Watershed Friendly, earn one of the following Certificates. Certificates will be awarded by the Lake Barcroft Environmental and Watershed Stewardship Committee and the Lake Barcroft WID.

**Gold Level** - Fulfill at least 15 items with at least one item in each of the four Categories.

**Silver Level** - Fulfill a minimum of 9 items in at least 3 different Categories.

**Bronze Level** - 'Better for Barcroft and the Bay' - Complete a single item in each category. We suggest Item B.

### Awards:

**Gold Level Gardens** - Receive a handsome Watershed Friendly Plaque for your yard, and have your garden featured in upcoming Lake Barcroft Watershed Garden Tours. It may also be featured in the Lake Barcroft Newsletter and Blog for all to learn from and enjoy.

**Silver Certificate Gardens** - Be invited to participate in Lake Barcroft Watershed Garden Tours and have your garden announced in the newsletter.

**Bronze Certificate Gardens** - Complete any single item in each category; we suggest completing every item 'B' --- 'Better for Barcroft and the Bay'. Receive a certificate in honor of your lake friendly achievements and be listed in the newsletter.

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