

# WISE WATER WAYS MAKE OUR LAKE BLUE



## *Sustainable Landscaping for Water Quality*

**Ninety** million households in the US are involved in some sort of gardening; growing ornamentals and turf, according to a 1995 National Geographic survey. Collectively these homeowners pose quite a threat to ecosystems. A number of studies in Connecticut show high levels of pesticides and nutrients, mostly nitrates used in fertilizers leaching into drinking water and running into lakes and rivers that enter Long Island Sound. Rethinking traditional landscaping and gardening practices in our back yards would significantly decrease threat to healthy-natural-functioning ecosystems.

Sustainable landscape techniques reduce the need for irrigation pesticides, and fertilizers by using many of the principles that natural ecosystems utilize. Now is the ideal time to learn more about sustainable landscaping and gardening. Now would be a good time to ask your professional landscaper about their philosophy on sustainable landscaping practices and phosphorous free fertilizers.

### **DESIGN**

The first step toward creating a sustainable

landscape is **site design**. It is important to work with what you have so consider the slope, soil type and content, and sun exposure.

Reduce the amount of storm runoff carrying pollutants into the lake by integrating natural vegetation, riparian buffers and detention basins to hold water, increase infiltration and slow rapid runoff during rain storms.

### **SELECT**

Once a basic layout is planned proper **plant selection** will achieve several goals for sustainability. Choosing ornamental plants that are native, non-invasive, and adaptable to your yard's conditions means less water and work. More disease and pest resistant gardens results in reducing the amount of synthetic products, entering our waters and impairing the water quality by non-point source loading.

### **MANAGE**

Homeowners probably are already practicing sustainable **landscape management** techniques each season. Consider incorporating some of these ideas into your seasonal plans if you aren't already. In the autumn



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recycle the debris and leaves by chopping them up with a mulching mower and rake or blow them in your gardens and border areas for mulch. By doing this you are imitating the natural process that takes place in forests.

### ***SUSTAIN***

Use slow release zero phosphorous fertilizers. These products have many benefits in sustainable landscaping efforts for better water quality. First and foremost unlike fast-release fertilizers with phosphorous, slow release fertilizers promote uniform growth throughout the growing season. This means less mowing, a lower potential for nutrients flushing into lakes and streams. Remember your grass may like phosphorous but our lakes do not.

Materials that plants need for growth like nitrogen or phosphorus are nutrients. Too many nutrients in a aquatic system, alter the natural processes and can cause massive plant growth known as algae blooms. Algae blooms deplete oxygen in the water which affects aquatic life.

### ***EDUCATE***

#### **Rain Gardens: A New Approach to an Old Challenge**

Thursday, April 16, 2009,  
1:00 p.m.

Registration required, begins March 1, 2009

Take a Break with Karen Filchak from the UCONN Cooperative Extension Service, who presents on the practical and environmentally helpful uses of rain gardens. Learn about how rain gardens may be used as bio-retention areas that absorb storm water runoff from impervious surfaces such as roof tops, streets, sidewalks, and parking lots.

Program cosponsored by East Hampton Public Library and East Hampton Parks and Recreation

#### **Connecticut's Wildlife**

Wednesday, April 15, 2009  
7:00 p.m.

Registration required, begins March 1, 2009

Visit the library during National Environmental Education Week! East Hampton resident and Master Wildlife Conservationist, Allen R. Petell, presents this program about CT wildlife. Learn about terms/foresteing patterns and the 'why' behind the critters we coexist with in our woodsy neighborhoods.

### **Resources Cited and Acknowledgements**

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