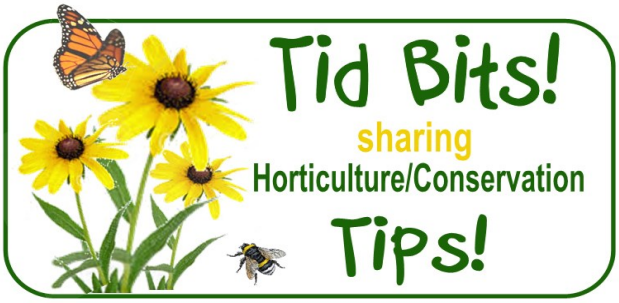


May 10, 2022

Contributed by Pam Keeton

TREES AS A BUFFER ZONE

We've all seen expansive waterfront lots and farm fields in Talbot County, covered with lush green turf or crops, but few trees. Several organizations and government agencies hope to change that.

Trees play an essential role in health of the Chesapeake Bay. They help keep pollutants from entering waterway, stabilize stream banks, provide food and habitat for wildlife, and keep water cool during the summer. Waterfront property owners are encouraged to plant more trees and shrubs.

A plethora of information is available on how to create a buffer that includes tree and shrubs and that will help the bay. The University of Maryland extension service is a great place to start. Check out this website for more information: https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/2021-03/FS726.pdf

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources also provides free "Buffers in a Bag" to waterfront property owners. Each backyard buffer bundle contains 25 shrub or tree seedlings of native species suited for streamside growing conditions, including sycamore, swamp white oak, river birch, common ninebark and either loblolly or white pine. Applications for Buffers in a Bag are usually accepted in April. https://News.maryland.gov/dnr/tag/buffers-in-a-bag/

Marylanders Plant Trees, another MD DNR program, offers coupons worth $25 off the purchase of one tree with a retail value of $50 or more at all participating retail nurseries and garden centers. https://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/MarylandersPlantTrees/Print-Your-Coupon.aspx

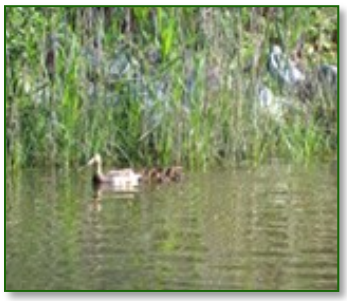
Considerations When Planning Buffer Plantings

- When considering plants for a shoreline, it's important to understand the type of soil, amount of water and length of water inundation in each area, and amount of sun vs. shade, as well as salt levels.
- Few things other than grasses can survive in low, marshy areas are constantly wet, especially if the salt content is high. Pickerelweed, saltmarsh cordgrass and big cordgrass are a few choices property owners can consider.
- Areas that receive periodic inundation are referred to as salt meadows. Plants that can tolerate salt meadows include grounsel bush, marsh elder, wax myrtle, and Northern bayberry.

As you move away from the water and the potential for saltwater intrusion, there is a wide variety of beautiful trees to consider.

- Oaks come in a variety of types and are an excellent food source for ducks, squirrels, nuthatches, woodpeckers, rabbits, and foxes. Swamp White Oak (Quercus bicolor) is an excellent choice for buffers as it tolerates some salt. Another benefit of oaks is that deer rarely eat them!
- Sweetbay Magnolia (Magnolia virginiana) is a wonderful choice for buffers with its white, fragrant blossoms and glossy dark green leaves. It is a fast-growing tree that also produces berries in late summer that are loved by a variety of animals and birds.
- American Sweetgum (Liquidambar styraciflua) trees grow naturally in bottom areas that tend to be moist. Goldfinches and purple finches eat the winged seeds.
- American Elms (Ulmus Americana) are large, fast-growing trees that are PH and salt tolerant and grow well in a variety of conditions.
- Eastern White Pines (Pinis strobus) prefer well-drained soils, and their year-round green needles offer valuable cover and nesting sites for songbirds. Seeds are eaten by nuthatches and woodpeckers.

Many things contribute to the health of the Bay and protection of wildlife, planting trees is one of the easiest and most cost-effective actions most property owners can do to help.

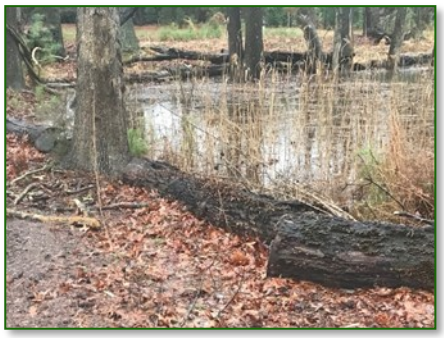


Grasses and shrubs along a shoreline offer a mama duck and her ducklings food and shelter.

A duck found the perfect place to lay her eggs at the base of an oak tree in the critical buffer. Wood chips and leaf debris are sources for a nest and pine seedlings provide cover.

A stand of pines help anchors a shoreline at the intersection of the Tred Avon and Maxmore Creek in Easton.

Trees along the shorelines of waterfront properties offer shade to people, habitat for animals and birds, protect shorelines, and improve water quality.



Trees and grasses filter run-off headed for a creek. The downed trees provide habitat for a variety of animals.