

Ecoscaping back to the future...



Chesapeake
Ecology Center

Season's Greetings!

*The gardening season officially begins on January 1st
and ends on December 31st. — Marie Huston*



Chesapeake Ecology Center **UPDATE**

IT'S BEEN A BANNER YEAR!

From the beginning of the year interview and taping by HGTV... to special programs through-out the year...to the end of the year Rain Garden Workshop, Make A Difference Day, and Pilot Student Project...it's been an exciting and very fruitful year!

CHESAPEAKE BAY SMALL WATERSHED GRANTS ANNOUNCEMENT PROGRAM HELD AT THE CEC

Adams Academy at Adams Park Middle School in Annapolis, Maryland is a primary partner and provides the home base for the Chesapeake Ecology Center (CEC). The school grounds and CEC gardens were chosen as the site for this year's announcement of the Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grant Awards, held on Thursday, August 24th. The program was held on the grounds in the grassy area between the Sweetbay Magnolia Rain Garden and the Native Meadow, and reportedly, "was one of the most successful press events the Bay Program has ever had." Speakers included, U.S. Senator Paul Sarbanes, U.S. Congressman — now U.S. Senator-elect — Benjamin Cardin, and Rebecca Hanmer, Director of the Chesapeake Bay Program, among others. Notably, Sally Pelham, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Kathy Lane, Director of Alternative Education; Jeff Tillar, Principal; and Shawn Ashworth, Assistant Principal, were in attendance.

\$2.6 million in federal grants were awarded to projects that will improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay, including \$200,000 for six projects in Anne Arundel County. One of the six awards was made to the Chesapeake Ecology Center to develop restoration projects within the College Creek watershed including two additional Native Plant Demonstration Gardens at the CEC and to provide assistance for the development and implementation of shoreline restoration projects at Calvary United Methodist Church.

"These small grants are making a big difference in promoting citizen-based stewardship and helping to repair degraded watersheds throughout the Chesapeake Bay basin. And who better to do this work than local community groups — the river organizations, schools, scouts, homeowner associations, land trusts — who have the local knowledge, energy and passion to care for their streams and natural resources — or the local governments which are responsible for local land use and other important decisions," said Senator Sarbanes. Congressman Cardin added a personal note to his comments and recounted his visit with Adams Academy students in June of 2003 — which was a wonderful and very memorable occasion for all those who participated. He also commented on how much the CEC gardens had matured since then and how great they looked.

Winter 2006

Vince Leggett and Zora Lathan also made remarks and described how the Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grant (CBSWG) program has been vital to the success of the CEC. CBSWG funding has enabled the CEC to work with students — especially at-risk students at Adams Academy — CEC members, volunteers, and a variety of groups to provide environmental education and, at the same time, develop on-the-ground habitat restoration/protection projects. Additional projects include: promoting conservation landscaping through various media and educational programs; fine-tuning and maintaining 20 Native Plant Demonstration Gardens and Sites at the CEC; providing technical assistance for a variety of community conservation landscaping projects at various locations — with a special focus on rain gardens; and rain garden presentations and workshops.

Primary funding for the Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program is provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program Office. Additional funding partners include the USDA Forest Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The nonprofit National Fish and Wildlife Foundation chose this year's 68 award recipients, and it administers the grants.

COLLEGE CREEK WATERSHED INITIATIVE

In 1997, Friends of College Creek spearheaded an assessment of the College Creek watershed. With sponsorship by the Lower Western Shore Tributary Team, we will update this assessment by compiling existing information and by conducting a Photo Survey. This past spring, Anne Arundel County prepared a Watershed Management Master Plan for the Severn River, which contains a good deal of information for the College Creek sub-watershed. Volunteers will help with a Photo Survey of the 732-acre (1.14 square mile) sub-watershed. This information will be added to the County's database and made available to all interested parties in the College Creek watershed, and the City of Annapolis, to assist groups in prioritizing restoration activities.

*From December to March, there are for many of us
three gardens — the garden outdoors, the garden of
pots and bowls in the house, and the garden of the
mind's eye.*

— Katherine S. White

BAY-WISE RAIN GARDEN WORKSHOP

On October 27, 2006, the Chesapeake Ecology Center partnered with Bay-Wise Master Gardeners (Cooperative Extension, University of Maryland) to hold a workshop and install a rain garden at the CEC. A filled-to-capacity room of 35 individuals, mostly Bay-Wise Master Gardeners, participated in the workshop, and there was a waiting list of several folks. The newly installed Bay-Wise Rain Garden is located at the entrance to the grounds and is highly visible to vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

In the morning, Zora Lathan presented an Overview on Rain Gardens. The CEC primer, *Ecoscaping Back to the Future... Restoring Chesapeake Landscapes*, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's plant guide, *Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping*, were given to each attendee. Classroom instruction was held in the morning from 10:15 AM to 11:10 AM. Zora led the group on a brief 20-minute tour of the CEC rain gardens and other gardens on site. To try and beat the predicted rain showers, the original schedule was changed and the group worked outside from 11:30 AM to 1 PM to install several native shrubs in the 675 square foot Bay-Wise Rain Garden. After planting the garden, the group headed back to the Adams Academy classroom for lunch and discussion — just as it began to rain, which was perfect timing for the plants! In the afternoon, Wanda MacLachlan, Area Educator for MD Cooperative Extension, gave a presentation on Native Plants for Rain Gardens. Time was allowed for questions and answers; and the workshop ended at approximately 3 PM.

Site preparation was all done by hand with a hoe and shovel. Over a few days prior to the workshop, Ricky Meyer worked approximately ten hours to prepare the site for planting. This was done ahead of time in order to have enough time for the classroom session and for planting. Zora and Ricky first measured and marked, with a hoe, a 15' x 45' area for the Bay-Wise Rain Garden. Ricky sprayed the area on three different occasions to eliminate turf grass and weeds.

Ricky Meyer also helped on October 27th, along with Valerie Pawlewicz, by planting a large river birch in the rain garden, as well as three additional large river birches in the Entry Garden. They also provided assistance to workshop attendees. Wanda and Zora provided hands-on instruction, which was a significant part of the planting session. Ricky and workshop attendees also hauled and spread aged wood chips throughout the rain garden, as well as spread 15 bags of shredded pine mulch. The next day, during the Make a Difference National Volunteer Day, volunteers added an additional 15 bags of shredded pine mulch. Three days later, a kiosk was installed to inform visitors about rain gardens.

The following native plants, obtained from Bay Ridge Nursery, and through Tree-mendous Maryland from Shemin Nursery, were installed in the Bay-Wise Rain Garden:

- 1 river birch (*Betula nigra*)
- 10 inkberries (*Ilex glabra*)
- 10 elderberries (*Sambucus nigra*)
- 9 beautyberries (*Callicarpa bodinieri var giraldi 'Profusion'*)
- 5 winterberries (*Ilex verticillata*)
- 3 oak leaf hydrangeas (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)

Notably, volunteers are needed to help maintain the Bay-Wise Rain Garden. Hands-on help is needed periodically. However, since some folks live a good distance away, there are other ways to provide assistance. Sponsorship and membership fees are allocated for maintenance of the CEC gardens — which are a public resource. Also, the primer, *Ecoscaping Back to the Future...Restoring Chesapeake Landscapes*, is normally sold as a fund-raiser for \$15 each, which is also allocated for garden maintenance. Please let us know if you would like to purchase copies by contacting Zora at zoralathan@earthlink.net. If you are interested in sponsorship or membership, please visit

www.ChesapeakeEcologyCenter.org to learn more about the CEC and to download a membership form. Feel free to visit the garden(s) and provide hands-on assistance at your convenience.

ADAMS ACADEMY STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT NATIVE PLANTS WHILE MAKING DRIED NATIVE PLANT ARRANGEMENTS

Students from Adams Academy collaborated with CEC volunteers in a pilot project to make Dried Native Plant Arrangements. Adams Academy has worked closely with the Chesapeake Ecology Center over the past few years; and the students have contributed time and energy to the landscape designs and installations on the school grounds. This year, the Chesapeake Ecology Center decided to try something new, that is, to harvest plants from the CEC gardens and dry them and use them to make Dried Native Plant Arrangements. Sarah Nees, the Art Teacher at Adams Academy, volunteered two of her classes for this pilot project. After discussing the difference between native and exotic plants, students were able to understand the importance of planting and protecting native plants for our native pollinators — which directly affects our food supply. Then the organized chaos began...

Zora Lathan brought a wide range of dried native plants from the school grounds and with the help of CEC volunteers, Joyce Donlon and Valerie Pawlewicz, showed the sixth- and seventh-grade students how to make visually balanced arrangements. Each student had a different idea of where to start and where to go. The initial pilot project was a huge success!

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2007

We look forward to working with students, CEC members, volunteers, and the general public in the coming year. The public is invited to visit the 20 Native Plant Demonstration Gardens and Sites for guided or self-guided tours at the CEC, on the grounds of Adams Academy at Adams Park, or take a virtual tour at www.ChesapeakeEcologyCenter.org. We will continue to hold scheduled garden tours and garden care days, host special programs and workshops, including another open house next fall, develop the College Creek Watershed Initiative in partnership with other groups, and provide technical assistance to a variety of groups.

For more information, contact:

Zora Lathan at zoralathan@earthlink.net, or Thistle Cone at ThistleC@aol.com. In the meantime, please visit our newly updated website at: www.ChesapeakeEcologyCenter.org

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