CONSERVATION LANDSCAPING

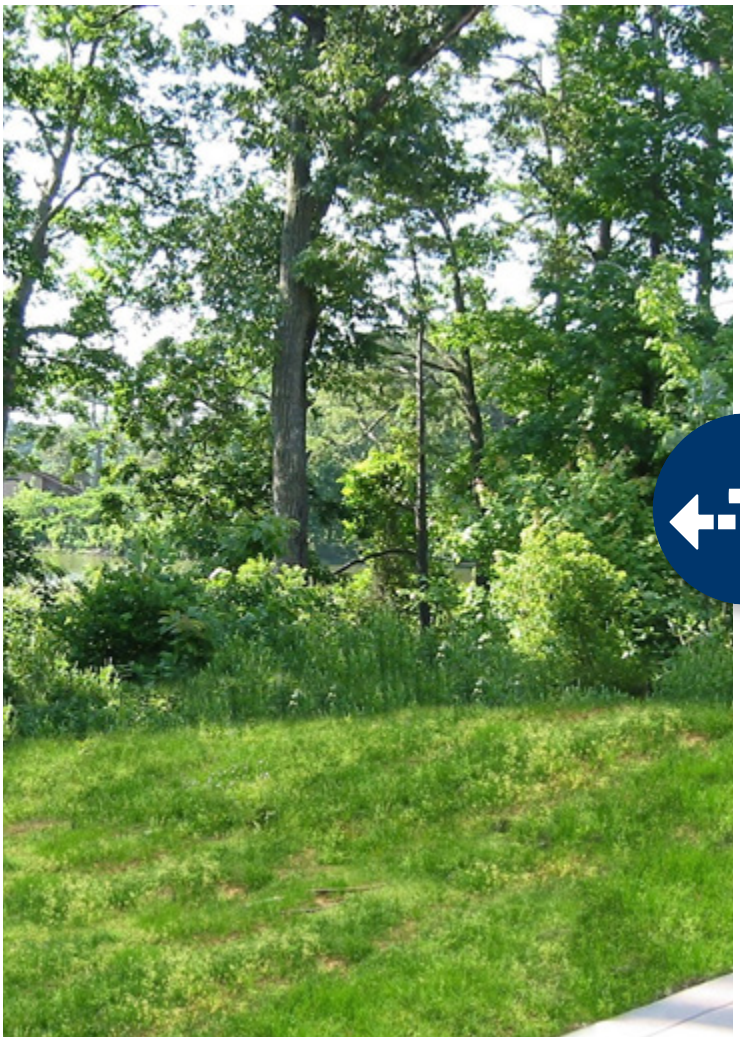
DEFINITION

Conservation landscaping is the practice of preserving areas of native vegetation along with converting turf grass, bare soils, or areas with non-native invasive plants into areas filled with native plants and habitats. Sustainable design practices including invasive plant removal, environmentally sensitive design, the use of native plants, integrated pest management, amending soil, and conserving material resources can all be used when designing a conservation landscape.

Many homeowners would prefer starting with a clean slate when choosing plant material for their yard, but it is important to assess the existing plant material in order to preserve the native plants that might already be there. This will help preserve the natural habitat and processes that are occurring, and it allows you to make the most of the site without drastically altering the site and expending too many resources.

Planting native species is important to provide food and habitat for pollinator insects, songbirds and other wildlife along with reducing water use and minimizing chemical fertilizer use. Since water is such a valuable resource, the need for irrigation in conservation landscapes can be reduced or eliminated. Non-native invasive plants should be removed and replaced with native species. Native plants are adapted to local climate and soil conditions and therefore typically require the least amount of maintenance.

BEFORE



REGULARLY MOWED TURF AREA

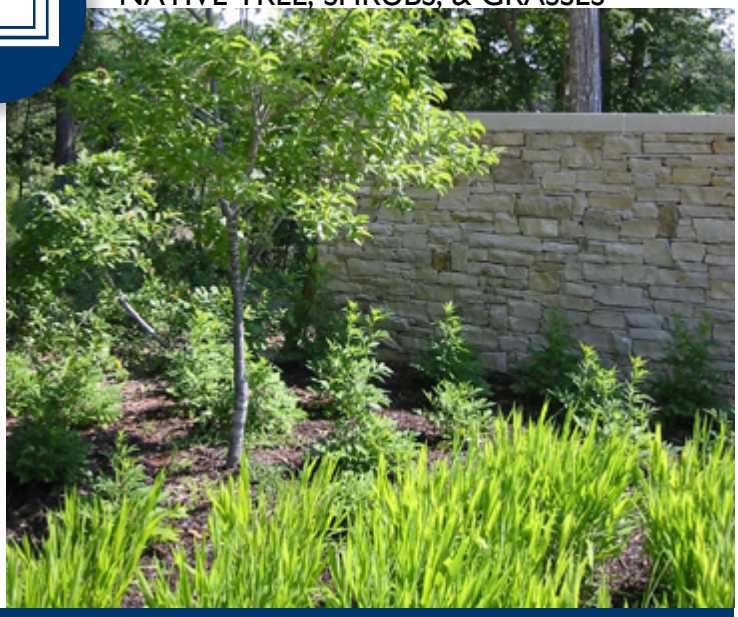
AFTER

NATIVE SHRUB PLANTING

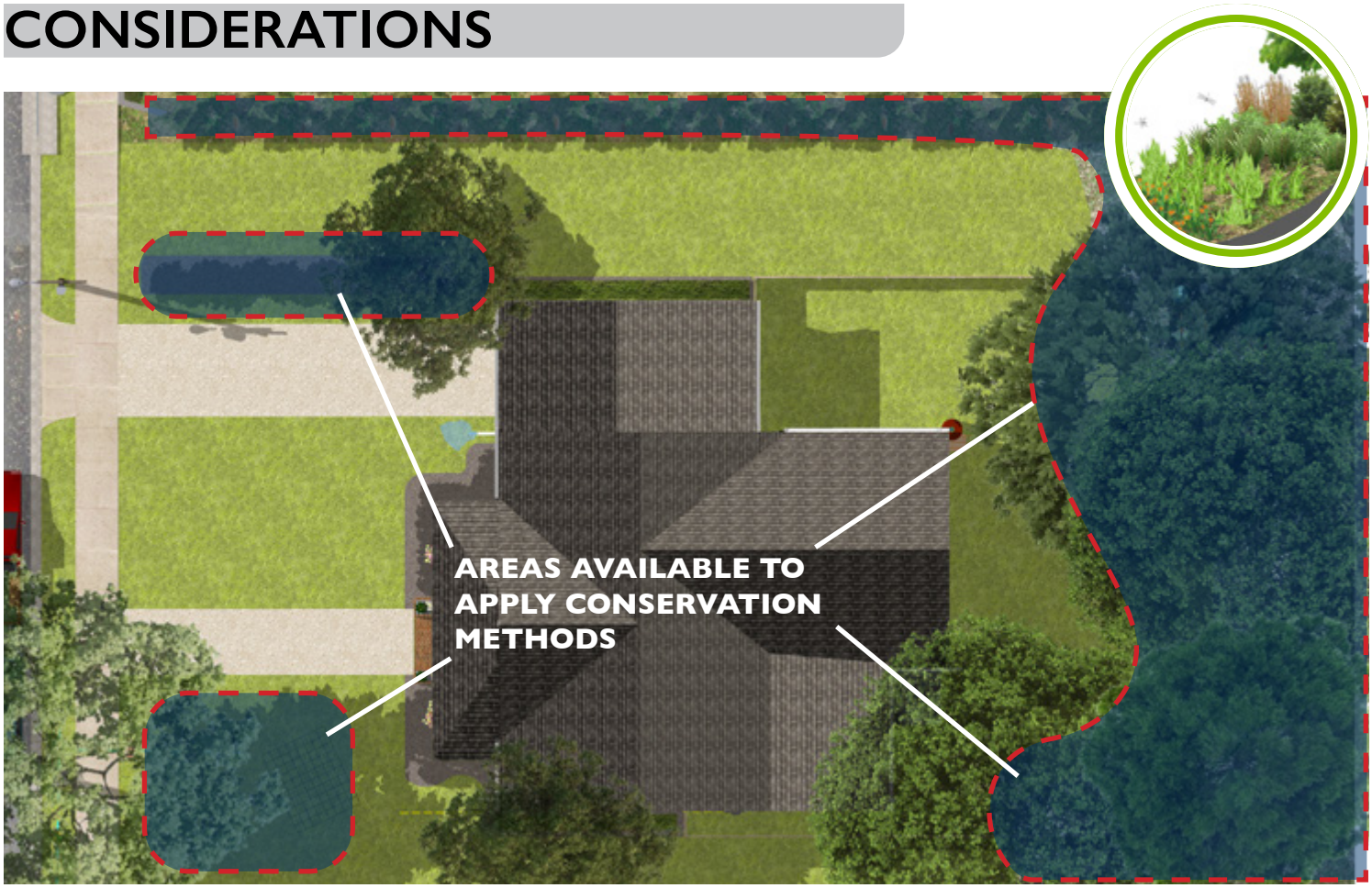
EXAMPLES

PERENNIAL GARDEN

NATIVE TREE, SHRUBS, & GRASSES



CONSIDERATIONS



The best place to start when designing a conservation landscape is by performing a site analysis. Consider the following:

- Existing vegetative and lawn areas
- Existing native plants
- salt tolerance if in a tidally influenced area.
- Soil types
- Sun / Part Sun / Part Shade / Shade
- Wind direction
- Slopes
- Views (to preserve or screen)

It is recommended to preserve existing environmental features and native plant communities on your site to the greatest extent practicable. If there are non-native invasive plant species, it is recommended that you remove them and institute an invasive species management plan. More information on non-native invasive plants and their management can be found from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation website: https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/invsppdflist

Converting turfgrass lawns to plant beds or meadows creates a more natural habitat. Conventional lawns require high maintenance including water, fertilizer, and herbicide use.

When designing a conservation landscape, it is a good idea to look to nature when placing plants. Different layers of trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses and groundcover should be used to provide habitat for wildlife and aesthetics for your home. Choose the right plant for the right place. See plant species appendix for growing requirements.
See the **Plant List** - click —»

If you want to capture and treat rainwater runoff, locate your conservation landscape downslope from any paved surface or lawn and create a rain garden (see "Rain Garden" section) or bioswale (see "Bioswale" section). These practices are considered Best Management Practices or BMPs.
See more about **BMP's** in the appendix. Click —»

SIZE

Conservation landscapes can be any size that fits into your existing property. Yards with large open spaces may be more suitable for meadow plantings that can be mowed annually, while smaller sections of yard may be more appropriate for plantings in mulch beds that can be maintained by hand.

A useful online tool for designing conservation landscapes can be found at the Watershed Stewards Academy at http://aawsa.org/conservation-design-tool/. This tool contains plant layout templates for various landscape sizes in different configurations. See plant species appendix, this booklet, for appropriate plant selections for Norfolk. If large areas are to be cleared and graded (anything over **2,500** square feet of land disturbance), check with the CITY OF NORFOLK to see if an erosion and sediment control plan is required.

See the **Plant List** - click —»

GETTING STARTED

The cost of a conservation landscape project is determined by the area covered, amount of plants, and the materials used. Here are a few questions to ask before you start: If you can do the digging and planting yourself? Do you want it all done at once or over a few seasons? Do you have the resourses to care for the plants on the property?

DO IT YOURSELF (DIY)
If you intend to perform this work yourself, see the lists for general tools and materials you may need to help you get started.

Tools & Materials:

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Paint for marking out plant beds
- Shovel
- Rake
- Heavy equipment rental
- Garden hose or bucket
- Tape measure
- Utility knife
- Wheelbarrow
- Wooden or metal stakes
- Hammer or mallet

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HIRE OUT THE WORK
Contact a CBLPro licensed and bonded landscape or site contractor. Prices will vary on amount of design and planting.

$$$

SPECIAL PLANTS / SEEDS
Specialty plants or seeds can be ordered Online or Visit this website to find native plant nurseries in Virginia: https://vnps.org/view/native-plant-nurseries/

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MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Check with the CITY OF NORFOLK on updated regulations for meadow management and if meadow management is allowed in your area.

All native grasses and wildflowers should be mowed twice per year:

- Early summer after the emergence of seed heads
- Early fall to prevent seeds of annual weeds from maturing

Turf grasses should be mowed on a regularly-scheduled basis during the growing season. See the Lawn Management section for more info-click —»

Leave grass clippings on the lawn to provide nutrients and encourage stormwater infiltration.

Plants should be mulched to a minimum thickness of **2** inches.

Mulch should be removed and replaced every two years.

Groundcover established by seeding and/or consisting of grass should not be covered with mulch.

Naturalized areas should be maintained with a cover of pine straw and/or leaf litter.

Watering of plant material should be performed regularly during the establishment period and thereafter, as needed, to ensure survival.

The soil should be sampled if you notice sick plants or at least once every **4** years and tested at a qualified soil testing laboratory.

Avoid lime and costly fertilizers by using organic materials such as leaf mulch and compost to top dress your plant beds and lawn.

Inspect quarterly the first two years and bi-annually thereafter.

If invasive species or weeds are present, correctly destroy or remove the invasive species and weeds.

Virginia Invasive Plant Species List https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/invsppdflist

If you choose to install an Infiltration Home Project and the vegetation density is less than **90**% cover, reseed and fertilize (if necessary) the exposed soil or area.

Organic means of disease and pest control should be used on an as-needed basis based on monitoring activities.

All dead and diseased plants should be removed and disposed of appropriately. Then replace plant material as necessary.

HOW TO

The focus of this Home Project is to have a holistic approach to improving the local environmental quality of your property and those surrounding you. While also providing years of benefits and beauty for your own enjoyment.

OPERATION	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Aeration *(Aerate lawn if needed)*		←	—	→					←	—	→	
Cleanup *(Rake leaves out of planting beds & cut back fall blooming plants)* *(Rake leaves / compost leaves & garden refuse)*		←	→							←	—	→
Fertilization *(Fertilize evergreens if needed)* *(Fertilize specimen trees and shrubs if needed)* *(Fertilize lawn if needed)*	←	→	←	→						←	—	→
Mowing *(Mow lawn as needed, edge and trim)*			←	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	→	
Mulch *(Mulch all plant beds or replace mulch as needed)*	←	—	→								←	→
Planting *(Plant B&B species - trees)* *(Plant container species - shrubs and perennials)* *(Divide groundcover & perennials as needed)*	←	—	→		→				←	→	←	→
Pools & Fountains *(Winterize pools and fountains)*											→	
Propogation *(Propogate plants by cuttings)*	←	→										
Pruning *(Cut back or prune vines and climbers)* *(Trim and shape needled evergreens)* *(Dormant pruning of fruit trees, evergreens and late-blooming ornamentals)* *(Prune and shape hedges)* *(Prune spring flowering shrubs and remove spent flowers)* *(Prune summer-flowering shrubs)* *(Deadhead perennials as needed)*		←	—	—	→	—	—	—	—	—	→	
Seeding *(Primary time to seed lawns)* *(Secondary time to seed lawns)*	←	→							←	→		
Transplanting *(Transplant trees and shrubs)*	←	—	→							←	—	→
Watering *(Water all plant beds, trees, shrubs, gardens and lawns as needed)*				←	—	—	—	—	—	→		
Weeding *(Weed all plant beds and lawns as needed)*				←	—	—	—	—	—	→		

Project Completion!

To return to the Table of Contents - click —»