

BayScaping: Tips for green yards to keep Casco Bay blue

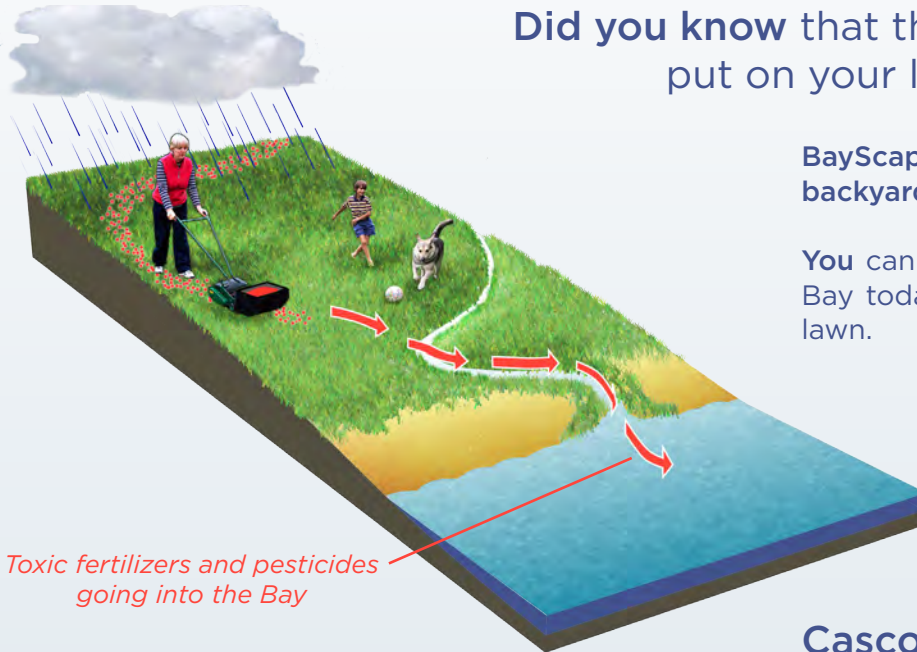


We improve and protect the environmental health of Casco Bay

Did you know that the **fertilizers** and **pesticides** you put on your lawn may end up in Casco Bay?

BayScaping makes the connection between your backyard and Casco Bay.

You can have a **direct impact** on the health of the Bay today by changing how you take care of your lawn.



Toxic fertilizers and pesticides going into the Bay

Casco Bay belongs to all of us!

Friends of Casco Bay has detected pesticides in stormwater running into Casco Bay.



Why should you be concerned?

Pesticides can harm aquatic animals (as well as children and pets)! When Friends of Casco Bay tested rainwater running into Casco Bay, we found pesticides at 13 coastal sites, some in amounts that the EPA has determined **can harm fish and other aquatic life**.

Nitrogen, one of the three components of **fertilizer**, can trigger **algae blooms** that coat coastal coves in **ugly green slime**. When these green plants die, decomposition sucks life-giving oxygen from the seawater. This process also releases carbon dioxide, creating acidic conditions that make it harder for **clams and mussels** to build and maintain their shells. Friends of Casco Bay has found excess nitrogen at most of the coastal sites it tested.

BayScaping will save you time, save you money, save your lawn, and save Casco Bay! BayScaping, because it will help you **reduce your use** of pesticides and fertilizers.

Learn more at cascobay.org/bayscaping

BayScaping year-round

Even if you do just one of these things each season, you can make a big difference for your lawn and for Casco Bay.

SPRING



- **Weed**
It's easier to pull emergent weeds by hand while roots are short and the soil is moist.
- **Overseed**
Seed thin or bare spots with endophyte-enhanced perennial ryegrass. It has the best chance of germinating before weeds take over.
- **Sharpen blades of the lawn mower**
Take your mower into a hardware store or garden center to sharpen blades. A sharper cut prevents tearing, which can open the grass to fungal infection.
- **Look for shady areas with thinning grass**
Grass has a hard time growing in areas that don't get 6 hours of direct sunlight. Don't fertilize; that just generates more weeds. Instead, plant shade-tolerant groundcovers such as bunchberry, partridgeberry, or Canada mayflower.

SUMMER



- **Cut little and often**
Mow at least weekly in the growing season and remove just the top third of the blade every time. Adjust lawn mower to the highest setting, preferably 3½ - 4 inches.
- **Mulch grass clippings**
For mature lawns (10+ years), grass clippings provide all the fertilizer they need. Leaving clippings returns about 50% of the nitrogen back into the soil.
- **Water deeply but infrequently**
Water deeply, 1-1.5 inches of water per week. You can measure the amount of water from rainfall and your sprinkler with a rain gauge or a tuna can. Let the lawn go dormant in late summer; it will green up again in the fall.
- **Seed thin or bare spots**
Use perennial ryegrass to fill in any bare spots or areas where you pulled weeds.

FALL



- **Aerate**
Aerate the lawn in early fall to reduce thatch, improve drainage, and loosen the soil.
- **Overseed**
Spread seed over freshly-aerated soil to fill in thin lawns or dead areas. Use seed mixes that include at least 70% fine fescue or tall fescue varieties for established lawns, ideally between mid-August and mid-September. Protect the seeds before they sprout with a 1/8 - 1/4 inch layer of well-seasoned compost.
- **Cut once more for winter**
Once grass stops growing, usually by early November, cut grass a little shorter (2-3 inches) to reduce the chance of snow mold disease come winter.
- **Fertilize frugally**
A soil test will tell you if you need to add fertilizer or adjust the pH (ideal pH is 6.0). Apply phosphorus-free, slow-release nitrogen fertilizer, preferably between Labor Day and Columbus Day. Test kits are available at keeper@cascobay.org.

WINTER



- **Don't pile snow on the lawn**
This promotes snow mold disease in the grass.
- **Plan your ideal yard**
How much lawn do you need? Think about alternatives to grass in areas that receive little sunlight, experience a lot of foot traffic, or are poorly drained. In wet areas, consider planting ornamentals that tolerate wet soil better than grass does.
- **Search for places where rainwater and snowmelt run off**
Identify areas where rain barrels, rain gardens, or bushes can help prevent runoff.

Learn more at
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