

5

CHOICES

you can make to preserve Cape Cod

1. MAKE IT A CAPE COD LAWN.

If you desire lawn area, make it a Cape Cod lawn. A Cape Cod lawn is whatever grows, including moss, violets, clover, and other broad-leaved plants. No irrigation and no fertilizers, pesticides, or fungicides are used. In the heat of the summer, the lawn goes dormant, reducing maintenance. A Cape Cod lawn is socially acceptable—after all, it's Cape Cod!

2. PLANT TREES & LEAVE THE LEAVES.

Trees provide shade, moderate temperature in the heat of the summer, and reduce the energy needed to cool your home. Trees help break up the energy of rainfall, enabling the water to soak more slowly into the ground to recharge the aquifer. Their leaves are nature's mulch. As the leaves decompose, valuable nutrients are recycled back into the soil. Leaves also protect overwintering bumble bees and other beneficial insects.

3. AVOID USING CHEMICALS.

A yard free of fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides and insecticides is a healthy one that welcomes children, pets, and wildlife, and won't contribute to nutrient pollution.

4. MANAGE STORMWATER.

Protect water quality by employing these best stormwater management practices. Minimize hardening the land's surface so rain and snow melt can soak slowly into the ground and not leave your property. Where hard surfaces are needed, consider permeable alternatives. Plant buffers of vegetation between lawn and the street or if you live on a pond, between your active space and the pond to intercept rainwater and take up nutrients. Harvest rainwater in a rain barrel from a gutter downspout for use in your garden. Consider installing a rain garden to capture roof runoff and plant it with native plants.

5. REDUCE LAWN AREA & PLANT NATIVE PLANTS.

Landscape design is very much like interior design of a room. A wise woman once said, "Why have wall to wall carpeting [of turf lawn], when a throw rug will do?" What is interesting to the eye is not the monochromatic rug, but the furniture, the architecture, and the accent pieces. Plant a variety of native plants appropriate for your yard and it will be more interesting and will bring life to your garden.

Your yard has an important role to play in

PRESERVING CAPE COD



Did you know?

How we design our landscapes and gardens, what we choose to plant, and how we care for our landscapes make a difference in the health of our water, supporting the local ecology, protecting biodiversity, and even addressing climate change.

Everything is connected.

On Cape Cod, our groundwater is the source of our drinking water and is replenished solely by the rain and snow that soak into the ground. Groundwater ultimately flows to the ocean, so whatever enters our groundwater, or gets carried into ponds, lakes, and streams by stormwater runoff, eventually enters the ocean. Nutrients from fertilizers and stormwater fuel unsightly algal blooms in our coastal waterways and trigger toxic cyanobacteria blooms in our freshwater ponds.

Less lawn and more native plants.

Many of our managed landscapes are composed of traditional turf lawn and non-native shrubs and trees such that our landscapes look like "anywhere U.S.A." Turf lawns are a big energy suck. Their maintenance is based on fossil fuels, so shrinking the lawn can reduce your carbon footprint. Lawns are wastelands for wildlife because they offer little meaningful habitat.

Native plants are the cornerstone of any ecologically friendly landscape. They give a sense of place to our

landscapes. Native plants are accustomed to the Cape's poor soils, so no need to fertilize. Planting more native plants in a pesticide-free landscape can create pollinator pathways and support birds with safe, natural food sources. Planting a variety of native plants appropriate for Cape Cod can help improve biodiversity, and biodiversity ensures stable ecosystems, especially when so much of our wild areas has already been developed and paved over.

Conserving and protecting water: our most valuable resource.

There was a time when we felt water-rich in the Northeast. However, a disrupted climate means periods of extended drought and heatwaves. We can also experience more frequent extreme weather events where inches of rain fall within an hour, causing flooding and stormwater runoff. The Cape's groundwater requires replenishment, so evaporation off parking lots and runoff from land hardened with pavement and buildings is a loss for our aquifer.



Find native plants for a natural Cape Cod landscape at CapeCodNativePlants.org

