

HB 322 – Restrictions on Use – Low-Impact Landscaping

Position: SUPPORT

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More and more communities are looking at natural, cost-effective ways to lessen the economic impact and environmental damage from stormwater runoff and habitat loss on private properties. Indeed, the legal requirements of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL and local MS4 stormwater permits can only be met by implementing stormwater management, such as low-impact landscaping, on private land (in addition to public land). To that end, many jurisdictions are offering incentives, rebates, and other programs to implement low-impact landscaping in residential yards and other private property.

Fortunately, many homeowners, renters, and other private landowners are ready and able to heed the call to join in this effort by managing their yards and properties with low-impact landscaping.

Unfortunately, some communities and HOAs restrict low-impact landscaping through outdated rules and lack of understanding of the economic, environmental, and aesthetic benefits it provides.

Low-impact gardening is intentional, utilizes native plants, maintained borders, and manages stormwater, while reducing demand for limited resources. These yards and properties are often the showplaces of their communities. While many community leaders have updated their rules to allow low-impact landscaping, other homeowners continue to face significant barriers when outdated, costly, and sometimes hazardous requirements are enforced by their communities and HOAs. Crippling fines, costly legal banter, and the removal of productive, beautiful, and healthy habitat often results. In many cases these homeowners have spent years doing their part to remove invasive species, practice xeriscaping (water conservation), manage runoff properly (stormwater management), and grow native trees, plants, and shrubs that are not only beautiful to look at, but that provide food and habitat for our declining pollinators and other biodiversity.

Low-impact landscaping reduces:

- 100 million pounds of dangerous chemicals used by homeowners EVERY YEAR
- 2 billion gallons of gas used for lawn equipment
- 3 billion pounds of toxic and carcinogenic air pollutants emitted from leaf blowers and mowers
- 9 billion gallons of water used PER DAY

Low-impact landscaping also:

- Helps keep the Chesapeake Bay healthy by reducing stormwater runoff
- Fights climate change by making soils healthier and sequestering carbon
- Supports the pollinator-friendly birds and insects that visit local gardens (which leads to more and reblooming flowers)
- Increases fruit harvest
- Improves air quality by increased planting of trees and other vegetation

By passing this bill, Maryland will remove unnecessary community and HOA restrictions and empower a ready citizen movement to improve their communities, restore the environment, revitalize the economy, and fight climate change.