

Home Habitat Tips

From Willowsford Conservancy

Willowsford Neighbors,

While Willowsford Conservancy works to protect and care for more than 2,000 acres in our community, the “other” 2,000+ acres are just as important, including the land you live on.

Each Willowsford yard/home has the potential to further enrich our entire ecosystem, including these top five ways:



Plant Native Flowers and Trees



Compost Your Food Scraps



Reduce Chemical Use



Leave the Leaves and Stems



Consider Nighttime Nights

The new “Resources” section of our website provides information, strategies and tips to follow many of the key practices that protect and care for Willowsford land and habitat. We respect each homeowner's land use choices (following Willowsford Property Maintenance and Design Standards). These habitat tips are guideposts to help further promote, protect and provide for our local ecosystem.



THE MISSION OF THE WILLOWSFORD CONSERVANCY:

The Willowsford Conservancy protects, maintains, and promotes the viable, long-term use of the land, integrating farming, recreation, conservation and education to enhance the quality of life for the residents of Willowsford and Loudoun County.

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PLANT NATIVE FLOWERS AND TREES

Not all flowers and trees provide the same benefits to our local ecosystem. Birds, bees and other pollinators are threatened by loss of habitat. Builder-planted greenery provides limited benefit. Make a difference by planting pollinator-friendly perennial plants that bloom from spring to fall. Flowers to consider: Milkweed, Sunflower, Aster, Goldenrod and Coneflower. Trees: Oak, Maple, Eastern Redbud and Eastern Red Cedar.



COMPOST YOUR FOOD SCRAPS

We all eat, and that subsequent food waste makes up as much as 33 percent of the trash we dispose of every day. And that food in the trash leads to a lot of methane gas. Composting is nature's way of recycling. Whether you decide to compost at home, contract for curbside collection with options in Willowsford such as Apex Organix, or take your organic matter elsewhere, know that you will be doing your part to help nature recycle those apple cores, melon rinds and other items.



REDUCE CHEMICAL USE

Overuse of chemicals to keep pests away or keep our lawns bright green can harm our local ecosystem. For example, lawn pesticides and mosquito spraying kill butterflies, dragonflies and fireflies, along with insects that birds need for survival and reproduction. Overuse of lawn chemicals can harm our waterways, too, from creeks to streams to the Potomac River to the Chesapeake Bay.

LEAVE THE LEAVES AND STEMS

A critical, yet often overlooked way to protect pollinators and other beneficial insects is to simply leave the leaves and stems in your garden beds. "Cleaning up" for the fall or early spring can be harmful because nests and overwintering habitat is disturbed or completely removed. Stems, leaf litter and undisturbed ground will help attract and support a diversity of pollinators and beneficial insects who need your help to overwinter, nest and reproduce for the next season.



CONSIDER NIGHTTIME LIGHTS

Dark skies are vital for keeping plants and animals safe in their natural environment. Nocturnal animals are adapted to the darkness and lose their way in artificial light. Birds often fly at night and lose their way with too much light. Nocturnal pollinators, such as moths, avoid lights and those that don't get eaten. Consider how you use your outdoor lights at night; consider turning them off more frequently, installing motion-activated lights or replacing sconces that only point light down.



More details and habitat tips: willowsfordconservancy.org/resources