

# Greener than Grass

## Can meadows be “greener” than grass?

Many homeowners, municipalities, and institutional landowners are converting lawns to meadows or lawn alternative plantings in selected areas of their property. This growing trend provides many economic and environmental benefits, and also creates a new look for many of our landscapes.

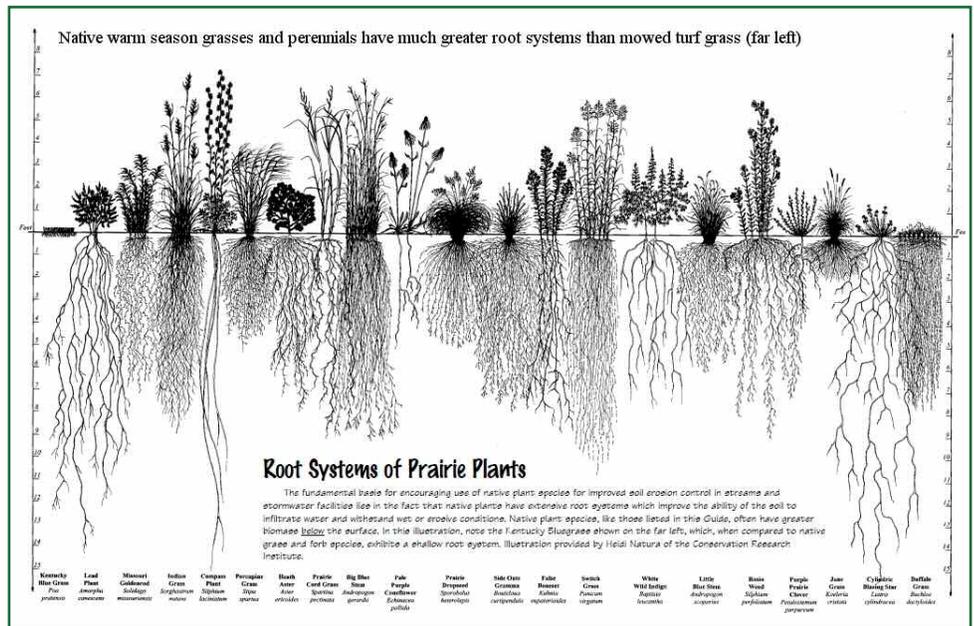
Reduction of the amount of mowed lawn is a simple and cost effective way to achieve cleaner air, reduce downstream flooding, and protect future water supplies. A meadow of native warm season grass plants and native perennials does a better job of absorbing stormwater and reducing erosion than a closely cropped lawn does. These taller plants intercept more rainfall and overland flow and have much deeper roots- an average of four to ten feet deep vs. six inches for regular lawn. Stopping the routine mowing of wetter areas or sloped areas also avoids the compaction and stripping away of important vegetation which can cause the soil to erode, or hold water and become mosquito habitat.



Naturalized Stormwater Basin at White Horse Village, Gradyville Road, in Edgmont.

Areas converted from lawns to more natural meadows also allow native plant species to establish themselves and provide critical habitat for birds, pollinators, beneficial insects, and other wildlife, particularly if meadows are contiguous to other natural areas such as woods or stream corridors.

Reducing costly mowing also helps us all breathe easier by globally reducing greenhouse gas emissions. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, a **new gas powered lawn mower produces in one hour the volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxide emissions equivalent to those produced by eleven new cars.** In summary, more meadows and less mowed lawn will lead to cleaner streams, cleaner drinking water, fewer at-risk species of birds and other wildlife, and a healthier Delaware Bay.



So the next time you see a meadow, you will perhaps reflect on how these new ways of managing our properties and communal open spaces are key to help safeguard a healthy and diverse natural environment for ourselves and future generations.

Fact: One hour of mowing is the equivalent of driving a car 350 miles in terms of volatile organic compounds.

