

Maryland State House Lawn Goes Greener

December 23, 2014

State celebrates year two of pesticide-free lawn program



When it comes to responsible lawn care, it is easy being green. At the Maryland State House in Annapolis the proof is right under foot. School children, tourists, elected officials and state employees are greeted by a lush carpet of green achieved without chemical additives.

December marks completion of year two of the Maryland State House Organic Land Project that spearheads the transition to organic care on state land. This is a joint initiative by the Maryland departments of Natural Resources and General Services, and the Maryland Pesticide Network.

“Thanks to the generosity of dozens of businesses, foundations and advocates, the Maryland State House has set an example by voluntarily transitioning to pesticide-free grounds,” said Governor Martin O’Malley. “I hope others will follow our lead and help protect our local waters, public health, and wildlife, as well our

beleaguered honey bee population, by reducing or eliminating chemicals on our lawns, parks and gardens.”

The program began by replacing traditional gardening practices with organic gardening on the State House grounds to improve the health and appearance of lawn, help protect public health and preserve natural resources. This year landscapers added critical components: organic soil boosters, aerating and overseeding the lawn.

“State House grounds have never looked better,” said Sam Cook, director of the Department of General Services Annapolis office. “I congratulate and thank everyone who worked with us on the organic land project. These efforts have created a healthier environment not only for everyone who works at the State House, but also for the thousands of visitors who enjoy touring its grounds every year, including hundreds of schoolchildren.”

The Maryland Pesticide Network is a grassroots coalition of organizations dedicated to protecting the public and the environment from adverse impacts of pesticides and promoting healthy alternatives. The group worked to secure funding to hire an organic land care consultant and rallied businesses throughout the country to donate the products and services needed. Companies that contributed are: Bee Safe Organics, Blades of Green, Garden Gate Landscaping, Jonathan Green Seeds, KW Landscaping, Natural Technologies, NaturalLawn of America, Osborne Organics, and PJC Ecological.

“The Maryland State House is the first in the country to transition to organic land care. We understand other states are looking to follow suit,” said Ruth Berlin, director of Maryland Pesticide Education Network and the Maryland Pesticide Network. “It’s encouraging to see our state leading by example and many Marylanders committing to reducing their use of pesticides so we can protect our babies, bees, and the Bay.”

According to the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA), pesticides can cause harm to humans, animals, or the environment because they are designed to kill or otherwise adversely affect living organisms. A 2013 [federal report](#) from the EPA, U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that toxic contaminants – including pesticides – are found widely in the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed, and there is potential for adverse ecological effects. In 2012, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a [policy statement](#) recommending reducing children’s pesticide exposure. For more information on pesticide-free lawn care, visit green.maryland.gov/917-2/.

