

Get Outdoors Poconos — Woods & Water
Easy, Natural, Water-Wise Tips for Your Landscape
Brodhead Watershed Association



Ahh, March! The air is still sharp with that cold, metallic smell of snow and ice. But in south-facing damp patches, mosses are brilliant green, and in the forest whiffs of humus drift up, earthy and warm. Snowdrops are raising their heads, and the mailbox is full of seed catalogs.

Even if you're not a gardener, March is a month for planning. Does the lawn take too much of your summer time? Are there places where rainwater pools? Would some flowering native shrubs or trees brighten things up?

One of these fine spring mornings, take a walk around your house and grounds. You may find simple ways to ease into a more natural landscape — and protect nearby creeks and drinking water at the same time.

Maybe you don't really need — or even use — all that lawn. What with mowing, trimming, fertilizing and watering during dry spells, maintaining a lawn takes huge resources. Planting a deep swath of tall native grasses along a back fence or a sunny wall can cut the work way down.

Or on the dark north side of the house, why not abandon that struggling grass that never looks like much, and replace it with native ferns. There are many, but evergreen wood fern, Christmas fern, stately interrupted fern, or lacy maidenhair will get you started.

If year-round color appeals to you, think about filling out an existing bed with flowering natives. Hummingbirds, butterflies and other beneficial birds and pollinators will be your reward when you plant black-eyed Susan, butterfly weed, goldenrod, milkweed, and wild bergamot. (For resources, check out the online native plant sale at www.brodheadwatershed.org. It goes live soon).

While you're at it, look for ways to keep rainwater and snow melt from pooling around the foundation or racing away down the driveway. A strategic rain barrel could capture stormwater run-off from the roof — and provide a source for filling birdbaths and watering cans. Send stormwater away from your driveway toward the lawn or woods with a sunken channel or swale planted with natives that like "wet feet." Native dogwood and blueberry bushes, cardinal flower, great blue lobelia, cattails and marsh ferns are good picks.

The watershed of the beautiful Brodhead Creek contains about 800 miles of creeks and streams. If you are lucky enough to live along one of them, you have lots of special ways to help keep that water clean and pure.

The easiest? Don't mow to the water's edge. Allow and encourage a deep natural buffer of shrubs and plants to develop there. Cut way back — or eliminate — fertilizer, herbicides and

other chemicals. Yank out invasives like knotweed. A natural vegetated buffer slows down stormwater runoff, filters out pollutants, and provides welcome habitat for local critters.

In the majestic natural bowl formed by Camelback, Mount Pocono Knob, and Cresco Heights, along the edge of the Plateau to Chestnut Mountain, Spruce Mountain and Skytop, every drop of water that falls converges in the Brodhead Creek, on its way to the mighty Delaware River and the Atlantic Ocean beyond.

These are some of the purest, clearest, coldest, highest-quality waters in all of the northeastern United States — our birthright, and our responsibility to the future.

This March, in the month of new beginnings, what will be your role in protecting this web of water?

For more information

For a list of plants native to Pennsylvania (and more good reasons for using them in your landscape), go to <https://extension.psu.edu/pennsylvania-native-plants-for-the-perennial-garden>

An online native plant sale sponsored by Brodhead Watershed Association allows you to order plants in advance, then pick them up at planting time. For details, go to www.brodheadwatershed.org. Online ordering begins soon.

WILLIAM PENN
FOUNDATION

