



Protect the Estuary, Create a Peconic-Friendly Lawn!

If you are a homeowner within the Peconic Estuary watershed, there are small actions you can take to make your yard Peconic-friendly. Estuary-friendly lawncare protects water quality and groundwater (including our sole source aquifer) on the East End and can keep your yard beautiful and low-maintenance. Learn more about ways to help reduce pollution below.

Keep Our Water Clean (I'll Drink to That!)

Stormwater is rain that flows over lawns and pavements, potentially picking up pollutants like synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, oils, and waste before entering storm drains, the groundwater, or rivers and streams. Stormwater pollution degrades wildlife habitats and the beautiful Peconic Estuary. Suffolk County drinking water comes from a sole source aquifer that is fed by our groundwater. If nitrogen or other pollutants are present in our groundwater, it eventually contaminates the aquifer where our drinking water comes from.



Homeowner Rewards Program

Under the Peconic Estuary Partnership's **Homeowner Rewards Program**, homeowners can earn up to \$500 to offset the expense of installing things like rain barrels, rain gardens, native plants, removing turf grass and/or pavement, or adding other "green" alternatives to their property. Applications are accepted annually from spring to fall. Check out the PEP website to find out more and see if you are eligible: <https://www.peconicestuary.org/what-you-can-do/homeowner-rewards-program/>.

Stormwater-Friendly Initiatives

When stormwater filters through soil, sand, and gravel it is dramatically cleaner when it enters our groundwater, nearby bodies of water, and storm drains. When stormwater flows over paved surfaces, it directly enters storm drains and waterbodies, bringing pollution and debris with it. Reducing runoff keeps the Estuary healthy and clean.

-  **Rain barrels** collect rainwater from roof runoff before it washes pollutants into storm drains and local waterways. Using collected rain for your gardens, lawns, and car washing will lower your water bill, and since rainwater doesn't contain the chemicals found in tap water, like chlorine, it is better for your plants!
-  **Rain gardens** are shallow areas with rocks and plants that collect rainwater and runoff. Rain gardens mimic the natural absorption and filtering abilities of a forest or meadow; they slow and clean stormwater runoff better than a standard lawn. With native grasses and flowers, you can create a beautiful way to reduce runoff, filter pollutants, and provide food and habitat for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife.
-  **Upgrading to an onsite water treatment system** can remove over 70% of the total nitrogen from each wastewater discharge. Old septic systems and cesspools pollute surface water and groundwater with nitrogen, even households that are inland. Upgrading your system protects water quality, boosts your property value, and reduces the risk of septic system failure. Suffolk County may even give you funds to help with your septic improvements. For more information: <https://www.peconicestuary.org/projects/bil/iasystems/>.





Pollinator-Friendly Initiatives



Native plants are beautiful and low maintenance! They are naturally adapted to the soil, climate, rainfall and wildlife of the Estuary, so they require less water, are generally resilient to pests, and don't require fertilizers. They do an excellent job absorbing and filtering stormwater and can improve your soil health with deep roots. Native species also provide important habitat and food for our native wildlife.



Designating a "no-mow" area of your lawn creates habitat for wildlife like insects and birds, which supports biodiversity in our region. Letting part of your lawn grow naturally and without pesticides will provide undisturbed areas for insects like fireflies to thrive. There is nothing quite like a summer yard full of fireflies!



Adding pollinator-friendly plants is the easiest way to beautify your yard while providing an abundance of pollen and nectar

to pollinators like birds, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Plant a wide variety of native plants that bloom from early spring into late fall and also consider adding plants that caterpillars need as well! Avoid synthetic pesticides or use organic alternative to protect pollinators. Pollinators are vital to the beauty of the Peconic Estuary as well as to the health of crops grown here. When pollinators thrive, we all win.

The Peconic Estuary Partnership has a database full of Peconic-friendly plants! You can use filters to find out which native plants will best fit your needs, such as shade, soil type, pollinator attractants, and deer resistance. Learn more at <https://www.peconicestuary.org/plant/>.

SUSTAINABLE LAWN CARE PRACTICES

GROW PLANTS FOR POLLINATORS

INSTALL A RAIN BARREL

CHOOSE A "NO-MOW" AREA

PLANT NATIVE SPECIES

UPGRADE YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

DON'T USE FERTILIZERS OR PESTICIDES

Peconic Estuary Partnership

PEP HOMEOWNER'S REWARDS PROGRAM

If you are interested in creating a Peconic-friendly yard, please apply for our Homeowner Rewards Program! Homeowners within the Peconic Estuary watershed can apply to be reimbursed up to \$500 for planting native plants, installing a rain barrel, removing turf and pavement, or adding other green alternatives to their property to benefit the environment. Applications open annually every spring and close in the fall. Scan the QR code to learn more and apply!