



# Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District

## DISTRICT NEWS

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## THE ROOTS OF LAWNS



The cultural norm of American lawns originated from expansive European lawns such as this one, sketched in the 18th century.

Lawns have been part of American culture for more than 100 years, but where did they originate, and why are they so popular? The roots of lawns can be traced back to the eighteenth century when affluent French landowners started framing their estates in the lush, green carpets as a symbol of their wealth. Their popularity quickly spread throughout the rest of Europe.

Lawns started cropping up in the United States nearly 80 years later.

After the American Revolution most people used their land to grow food, but those who were wealthy enough to buy food started to cultivate lawns so they would look respectable in the eyes of European visitors.

It took some time for lawns to become popular with the general American population. For many years people simply couldn't afford to *not* grow food on their property. However, with new farming techniques developed in the 1940's, farms were suddenly able to produce massive amounts of food easier than ever before. People now had spare land and didn't know what to do with it. The lawn care industry, which promoted the use of chemicals to grow a lush, green lawn, practically sprouted overnight. The type of lawn that used to be considered a status symbol was slowly transformed by the lawn care industry into the status quo.

For the past three years the District has been promoting the YardScaping program and working to teach people how they can have a beautiful, green lawn without relying on chemical fertilizers and pesticides. While inspiring people to use natural lawn care methods is a great place to start, the real uphill battle comes with changing the way people think about their lawns. A lawn should be a healthy, natural, diverse ecosystem where the greenness of the grass is supported by deep roots and healthy soil, not by synthetic fertilizers and pesticides that make grass *look* green and healthy.

For more information about YardScaping, visit the District's website at [www.cumberlandswcd.org](http://www.cumberlandswcd.org) and click on the ducky!

*The joy and delight of every home builder is a good lawn. Without it all efforts at adornment seem futile. The green carpet is the canvas upon which the house, trees, shrubs, and flowers depend for setting.*

– Herbert Kelleway,  
 Boston landscape architect, 1907.



**Save the Date for the Highland Lake Community Forum**  
For over a decade, the District has worked alongside the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, the Highland Lake Association, and local citizens to improve the water quality of Highland Lake. Located predominantly in Windham and Falmouth, with a small portion in Westbrook, Highland Lake is over two and a half miles long with a watershed of eight and a half square miles. The water quality, which was once rapidly declining, is now showing signs of improvement due to ongoing restoration efforts.

Conservation work continues through a third phase of the Highland Lake Conservation Project, funded through a federal grant. On-the-ground fixes will address sites with the highest impact to the Lake's water quality. In addition, the District will partner with the Highland Lake Association to host a watershed community forum.

Highland Lake Watershed residents are encouraged to participate in the **Highland Lake Community Forum** on Saturday, September 12th in the Windham High School Cafeteria. It will take place from 8:30-1:30 with lunch provided for participants. The goal of the forum is for citizens to help create an action plan to continue efforts to improve the Lake's water quality. For more information, visit our website or contact Heather True at [htrue@cumberlandswcd.org](mailto:htrue@cumberlandswcd.org).

### District Helps Educators Connect Classrooms to Cafeterias

On Friday, August 7, over 90 educators learned about incorporating local foods, school gardens, composting, and more into their classrooms. The "Connecting Classrooms to Cafeteria Conference: From Arugula to Zucchini" was held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Gorham Middle School. The workshop was open to both formal and non-formal educators who work with K-12 students, and participants traveled from across the State to attend.

The hands-on, one day conference featured the following sessions:

- Maine Harvest Lunch "Maine Food for Maine Kids K-8 Curriculum Program" Training
- Integrating School Garden Activities into your School Curriculum
- The Making of a Maine Harvest Lunch Cooking Class
- School-Wide Composting Workshop
- Preserving the Harvest Workshop
- Shifting Student Nutrition Preferences with Taste-Testing Activities

Lunch featured delicious, local foods prepared during the cooking class taught by chef Cheryl Wixon. A panel discussion about starting school gardens was held during lunch. Panel presenters included Heather Whitaker, sixth grade teacher at Gorham Middle School, Becki Schreiber, Director of School Nutrition in Yarmouth, and Richard Randolph, Owner and Executive Director of Rippling Waters Organic Farm in Standish, all of whom have started successful school gardens in their communities.

In addition to the District, conference sponsors and presenters included: PROP's Communities Promoting Health Coalition, Gorham School Department, Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association, Cultivating Community, Maine School Garden Network, and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension.



## WATERSHED PROTECTION

### Long Creek Restoration Team Awarded EPA Merit Award

The New England Office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) selected the Long Creek Restoration Project Team to receive an Environmental Merit Award in recognition of its exceptional work and commitment to the environment in 2008. EPA's Environmental Merit Award is an annual award that recognizes outstanding environmental advocates who have made significant contributions toward preserving and protecting our natural resources.

The Long Creek Restoration Project Team has worked for eighteen months to develop a coordinated watershed restoration plan that will bring Long Creek into compliance with state and federal water quality standards, and to open up new recreation opportunities for local residents and visitors.



The Long Creek Restoration Project is a collaborative, community-based initiative convened by the City of South Portland and led by a Steering Committee made up of representatives from the four Long Creek watershed municipalities (South Portland, Portland, Westbrook and Scarborough), area businesses, non-profit organizations, and state agencies. The City of South Portland obtained a grant from EPA and DEP to partner with the other watershed municipalities and individual stakeholders in this effort.

The Project Team members that were presented with EPA's Environmental Merit Award are as follows: Bramlie Development Corporation, Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, CBRE/The Boulos Company, City of Portland, City of South Portland, City of Westbrook, Maine Wetlands Bank, Conservation Law Foundation, Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District, ecomaine, Fairchild Semiconductor, FB Environmental Associates, Inc., Field Geology Services, General Growth Properties (Maine Mall), Gorrill-Palmer Consulting Engineers, Gosline & Reitman Dispute Resolution Services, Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce, GZA GeoEnvironmental, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Maine Department of Transportation, Maine NEMO, Maine Turnpike Authority, Portland Marriott at Sable Oaks, National Semiconductor, Oak Engineers, Ocean Properties Ltd., Portland International Jetport, South Portland Land Trust, SP/CE Chamber of Commerce, Town of Scarborough, University of New Hampshire Stormwater Center, and Woodard and Curran.

The Merit Awards were presented at a special ceremony held at Faneuil Hall in Boston on Wednesday, April 22, 2009. The 2009 ceremony was a celebration of environmental achievement in New England.



### Native Plant Spotlight

#### Blue Flag Iris (*Iris versicolor*)

- Maine's native iris
- Grows 1-3 feet tall
- Prefers full sun to part shade and moist to wet soils (can grow in up to 6 inches of standing water)
- Flowers are typically blue-violet and bloom in the late spring
- Attracts butterflies





**Cumberland County Soil & Water  
Conservation District**

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**Erosion. Lawns. Shorelines. Driveways. Roads. Permits.**

The District offers technical assistance services throughout Cumberland County for a fee.

Services provided include:

- Technical assistance site visits & reports with recommended improvements
- Professional engineering
- Third party inspections & assessments
- Permit assistance & preparation
- Review of Erosion & Sedimentation Control & Phosphorus Control Plans

Visit [www.cumberlandswcd.org/ta](http://www.cumberlandswcd.org/ta)  
or call (207)892-4700 to learn more.



Before

Plants and infiltration steps, right, were installed after a technical assistance visit at this property on Forest Lake in Windham.



After



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The District prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

To receive this newsletter electronically, please email [sarah-plummer@cumberlandswcd.org](mailto:sarah-plummer@cumberlandswcd.org)