



**CHESAPEAKE BAY
FOUNDATION**

Saving a National Treasure

Lafayette River Rain Gardens

Lafayette Watershed

Though picturesque neighborhoods abound along the shorelines, the Lafayette River is one of the most urbanized tributaries in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Norfolk's biggest building boom occurred from the 1900s to the 1950s, a time when the negative impact of impervious surfaces and the importance of wetlands were not well understood. Unfortunately, the Lafayette River is plagued with problems typical of urbanized waterways—excessive nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution that come from a variety of sources including stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces in the watershed.



Harmful algal blooms, depicted in these odd-colored swirls, invade the Lafayette and other nearby waterways every summer.

To tackle water-quality and restoration challenges facing the Lafayette, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) and its partners have been working under one umbrella to create a watershed action plan to restore and protect the Lafayette. This has been made possible by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, using funds from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). We hope that this community-based effort will vastly improve the Lafayette's ailing water quality.

One CBF-led, community-based restoration project is the construction of three Norfolk-area rain gardens in the Lafayette watershed: Larchmont Elementary School, the Norfolk Fitness and Wellness Center, and the Old Dominion University Rowing Center at Lakewood Park. Each is designed to add beauty to the landscape and to help catch rainwater as it runs off hard surfaces like buildings, parking lots, and roads.

Why Rain Gardens?

When rain lands on an impervious surface, it cannot be absorbed and eventually runs off and enters a storm drain or nearby creek or other waterway. This excess water (called runoff) can cause erosion and carries sediment, pesticides, fertilizers, and other pollutants off the land and into our waterways.

Rain gardens contain plants that intercept and slow down stormwater runoff and absorb or trap much of what it contains. Rain gardens also restore wildlife habitat by attracting creatures such as insects, butterflies, toads, and birds of prey.





Help improve water quality in the Lafayette watershed with these healthy lawn tips:

- Test your soil.
- Fertilize only when and where necessary.
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn.
- Use compost as fertilizer.
- Use pesticides and herbicides sparingly, if at all.
- Provide habitat for wildlife.
- Reduce the size of your lawn. Plant areas with native trees and shrubs instead.
- Don't overwater. In fact, Excess water can lead to disease, erosion, and polluted runoff.

- Build a rain garden.
- Use a rain barrel to water your plants
- Get more tips at cbf.org/landscaping.

For additional lawn care tips that can protect the Lafayette (including a Lafayette Watershed Native Plant Guide), visit cbf.org/Lafayette or contact the Chesapeake Bay Foundation at 757/622-1964 or hamptonroads@cbf.org.

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Rain gardens were constructed by students of Virginia Wesleyan College as part of CBF's Alternative Spring Break Program.



Project partners:



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