

The Back Cove YardScaping Demonstration Project

The Back Cove YardScaping Demonstration site before work started.

YardScaping Comes to Portland's Back Cove

YardScaping—incorporating the concept that healthy and beautiful landscapes can be created and maintained through ecologically based practices—is coming to the Back Cove in Portland, Maine. After several years of planning and fundraising, the Maine YardScaping Partnership, a statewide alliance of businesses, government agencies, and environmental groups, has begun work on its first public YardScape—two-and-a-half acres along the shore of Back Cove, donated by the City of Portland, one of the partners. The YardScape will showcase a series of gardens appropriate for urban, suburban, and rural settings, and demonstrate how homeowners can easily design and install low-maintenance lawns and landscapes that reduce pesticide and fertilizer use, lower water usage and runoff, promote native and non-invasive plants, support wildlife, and create a healthier environment.

The first part of the project is almost complete: in the summer of 2007, members of the Maine Conservation Corps, the City of Portland's Parks & Recreation and Public Works departments, and Maine Master Gardeners constructed most of the 1,000-foot-long walking path that will wind through the gardens and connect with the popular Back Cove Trail. The path surface will change appropriately from stone dust to superhumus, as it meanders through the different settings.

In the spring of 2008, after fill is added to the rain garden area to bring it up to the required elevation, the remaining section of the path will be finished. Once the path is completed, plants will be installed in phases, according to the site design and as funding allows. In the late summer, low-maintenance or no-mow grass will be planted in specified areas (*see over for the site plan and planting layout*).

The total cost for the project is estimated at \$160,000. The EPA Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program and the Davis Conservation Foundation have awarded grants of \$34,000 and \$10,000, respectively, and a major fundraising campaign is currently underway to raise the additional funds.

The YardScaping Partnership was formed out of a rising concern about yard care chemicals washing into water bodies, as well as the risks of pesticide exposure to people, pets, and wildlife. Back Cove is an especially suitable site, since it, along with Casco Bay, receives runoff from thousands of yards and lawns in Greater Portland and testing by Friends of Casco Bay has detected multiple yard care pesticides in the water.

For more information on the Back Cove project and YardScaping, go to www.yardscaping.org.

Join these YardScaping Partners!

Allen, Sterling & Lothrop • Bar Mills Ecological • Carroll Associates, Landscape Architects • Casco Bay Estuary Partnership • City of Portland • Congress of Lake Associations • Friends of Casco Bay • Friends of Scarborough Marsh • Jacobs Edwards and Kelcey • Kennebunkport Conservation Commission • LakeSmart Program • Lisa Cowan, LNC Landscape Architecture • Maine Board of Pesticides Control • Maine Department of Agriculture • Maine Department of Environmental Protection • Maine Landscape & Nursery Association • Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association • Maine Soil & Water Conservation Districts • Maine State Planning Office • Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program • Natural Resources Conservation Service • New England Organics • O'Donal's Nurseries • Portland Trails • Skillin's Greenhouses • Southern Maine Community College • Think Blue Maine Program • Town of Brunswick • University of Maine Cooperative Extension



Maine Conservation Corps Workers laying out the path.



Roughing out the route.



Master Gardeners loading superhumus for the path.



Superhumus in place on the rural section of the path.

