

Bay-Wise Yard Visit Guidelines

Helpful Hints for Bay Wise Leads:

Scheduling the visit:

- Utilize the List of Calvert MG with Advanced Bay- Wise Training- to identify local volunteers. If you learn of specific homeowner (HO) concerns, identify volunteers with experience and knowledge in those areas if possible. A minimum of two BW trained Master Gardeners required for ALL visits. If other MG are invited, please confirm this is OK with the HO. It is great to include others for training.
- Send introductory email to HO sharing expectations of the visit including time requirements and ask them to give a range of dates and times (tailor this to your availability). * Sample provided. HO questions include address, phone number/s, lot type (sloped, waterfront, etc.), and specific concerns, what they are hoping to gain from the visit.
- Include link or attachment of the BW yardstick and BW Guidelines https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/docs/programs/bay-wise/Baywise_5pager_06_17_14_FINAL.pdf for HO from the University of Maryland Extension website, under the Bay-Wise resources. If they have identified a specific issue such as erosion, you may include a link to that information.
- Email potential team members, providing your availability and the HO availability. Ask them to respond to all. Select your team from the scheduling availability responses.
- Email the HO to confirm and CC the members of your team. Send confirmation email to HO and include the appointment date/time and HO Address in the subject line; include your team members on the email. Be sure to provide your contact information including email and Mobile phone for all.
- Send confirmation email to HO 1 week prior to the visit and copy team members as a reminder. *Please forward this email to Bay-Wise coordinator.*

During the visit:

Forms: For certifications ONLY: When you sit down with the HO to review the packet, ask them to complete the Consent for Photography and the Bay-Wise application (including the name of all participating, and the size of the lot).

Return these forms and the completed yardstick with the number of inches/score and sign number to the envelope in Bay-Wise cabinet at the CRB. Please also email or text the sign number to Bay-Wise coordinator.

Follow up email to HO:

Summarize the visit with suggestions and resources to answer their concerns or questions. For example, they may have contacted us to request information on pollinator plants, and during the visit other issues were identified and discussion such as erosion or invasive plants. We can offer helpful suggestions/resources to the HO in writing. HO's often ask about plant suggestions for specific locations/conditions, such as shady slopes. This information can be found on the UME Web site, USFW,

MNPS, resource list in packets. Members of the team may also send the lead person suggestions or resources to include in the home owner follow-up summary.

Guidelines for the Bay Wise Yard Visit

- All Attendees should bring their own copy of BW packet and their yardstick for reference. Lead person bring packet and sign for HO. If special issues identified it is helpful to have those resources available if possible. If not, it is fine to send this information in email later. You can bring an extra yardstick for HO to fill out and keep. All MGs should wear their badges.
- Introduction: For all visits (certifications and consultations): Provide introductions and review again the plan for this visit: “We will walk your yard and you can ask questions or show us an area of concern. Then we would like to sit down with you to review the packet of information.”
- We are invited guests who may offer advice and suggestions. We do NOT impose requirement or demands. It is possible to get 36 points in many ways, and it is not required that every aspect of the yardstick be followed. For example, although we always recommend native plants, the yard may also include cultivars and nonnative plants (although we recommend removal of any invasive plants).

First, walk the yard with the team and HO:

- When walking the yard, address the specific HO questions and concerns. We should also politely point out areas of concern such as erosion and storm water management issues as educational opportunities. Observe for invasive plants and help the HO identify them. Explain the reasons this may be a concern and how to dispose of the invasive safely. Also, include this in written follow-up.
- They may ask about problem areas: compacted soil, places with limited planting success or specific plant/tree issues. Often HO may ask for help identifying plants/trees or diseases. We are NOT expected to have all the answers. We can provide the resources or information in the follow-up email. We could also refer the HO to the Extension web site for ID of plant issues (card in packet) or suggest an arborist if needed. We can suggest soil testing if indicated; information is contained in resource list.
- *If we are invited as consultation visit, but the team agrees the yard meets certification standards, please provide the certification during the visit. You can always make arrangements to deliver the sign later.

Packet review:

- We should review the yardstick for both consultations and certifications. The yardstick is an excellent teaching tool. For consultations, if the HO has limited interest, this may be adjusted in terms of the depth of the review.
- Make sure to review all the materials in the packet, using them for further education. Team members can take turns reviewing various literature in the packet. This gives everyone more experience and helps us learn as well. Each team member brings unique experience and value to the visits.

- For consultation visits, be sure to encourage the HO to share their success with us, and feel free to contact us if further questions arise. We should ask the HO if they would like a MG to contact them for certification in (ask HO to select a period (6-12 months)).

Sample Introduction letter to Homeowner

Thank you for contacting the Master Gardeners and congratulations on your interest in sustainable gardening practices to protect the Bay.

We will be happy to schedule a Bay-Wise yard visit. During this visit we will walk with you in your yard and discuss your gardening questions. Then we will sit down with you to review the packet of information. The visit with 2 or more Master Gardeners generally takes 1.5 to 2 hours.

A few questions, that will help us to prepare: Are there any specific concerns or areas you would like us to address during the visit? What is your address and phone number please? And could you be available on a weekday evening after [5:30 PM](#)? If not, we would be happy to look at the weekend dates you provided.

This information will help you prepare for the visit:

https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/docs/programs/bay-wise/Baywise_5pager_06_17_14_FINAL.pdf

<https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/docs/programs/bay-wise/FS-1014%20Landscapes%20That%20Help%20the%20ChesapeakeBay.pdf>

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Thank you,

Sample follow-up letter to Homeowner:

Thank you again for inviting us to visit your yard. You have planted many lovely trees, that provide shade and support wildlife. Adding more native plants and shrubs, to support a sustainable landscape and prevent erosion is a great next step.

Below are shrub and grass suggestions for the sunny slope:

Shrub suggestions

Mapleleaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*) – provides berries for birds

Blackhaw (*Viburnum prunifolium*) – provides berries for birds

Holly – suggest a smaller cultivar of our native holly if you don't want a very large plant– *Ilex opaca* (evergreen, great for wildlife not only as a food source but also provides cover)

New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*) – tolerates drought

A couple grass species that could be interspersed between the shrubs:

Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)

Purple love grass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*)

Below are two additional lists of plants for slopes, one is for sunny slopes and one for shade. Some of the shade plants listed may also work for the partially shady side with the large pine trees. Other ground-covers for the shady slope include Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) and Foam flower ([Tiarella cordifolia](#)). Both spread by runners.

<https://extension.umd.edu/hgic/topics/native-plants-sunny-slopes>

<https://extension.umd.edu/hgic/topics/native-plants-shady-slopes>

We would suggest removing the invasive English ivy and disposing for trash pick up, after placing in black plastic in the sun for several days. The ivy growing on the trees can be snipped near the ground level and [at about 6-10](#) inches up. This should kill the ivy that is growing up into the trees.

We look forward to hearing about your progress, as you begin to implement these changes. We would also be happy to return to certify your yard at a later date. Please feel free to contact us with other gardening questions. Happy gardening!