



# NEWS RELEASE

Office of the Secretary

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Maryland Farmers Offer Winter Planning Tips to Backyard Gardeners** *“Take it From Maryland Farmers: Backyard Actions for a Cleaner Chesapeake Bay”*

ANNAPOLIS, MD (February 1, 2013) – Despite the recent snow, spring really is just around the corner. Homeowners who want to improve their lawns or gardens this year and contribute to a cleaner, healthier Chesapeake Bay, should start planning now—and there’s no one better to provide conservation planning tips than Maryland farmers. The Maryland Department of Agriculture’s *Take it From Maryland Farmers: Backyard Actions for a Cleaner Chesapeake Bay* homeowner education program provides wintertime conservation planning tips and online resources for lawn and garden enthusiasts throughout the year.

“Many farm-based conservation measures can easily be adapted to lawns and gardens. Maryland farmers are required by law to use nutrient management plan to protect waterways. Homeowners, too, will soon be required by Maryland’s new *Lawn Fertilizer Law* to use best management practices, observe fertilizer blackout dates and follow University of Maryland recommendations when fertilizing lawns,” said Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance.

But why wait to help the Bay? Homeowners can help the Bay when snow and ice are on the ground by following this simple rule: never use fertilizer to de-ice driveways or walkways, no matter how much it snows. The practice is bad for the Bay and will soon be banned by Maryland’s new lawn fertilizer law which takes effect this fall.

Here are more tips for homeowners to follow this winter:

- Read up on Maryland’s New Lawn Fertilizer Law at [www.mda.maryland.gov/fertilizer](http://www.mda.maryland.gov/fertilizer).
- Research native plants that require little or no care, but provide habitat and food for wildlife.
- Take a soil sample when the ground thaws. Remember that fall, not spring, is the best time to fertilize lawns.
- Scope out a spot in the yard to start a compost pile. Research different types of compost bins or learn how to make your own. Keep compost bins covered to prevent over saturation and leaching of nutrients.
- Check dates for upcoming Master Gardener classes at local Extension offices. Or visit [www.mastergardener.umd.edu](http://www.mastergardener.umd.edu).
- Build or purchase a rain barrel to help conserve water, save on water bills and protect plants during droughts.
- Plan a rain garden for a low spot in the yard so that stormwater infiltrates slowly into the ground rather than running off into the nearest storm drain.
- Check the guy wires on newly planted trees to make certain that they are not gouging the bark.

For more Winter Garden Planning Tips and Checklists, including tips about what to do when it warms up, see: [http://mda2.maryland.gov/resource\\_conservation/Documents/wintergardenplanner.pdf](http://mda2.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/Documents/wintergardenplanner.pdf)

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