

Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council's
3rd **Turning a New Leaf** Conference
Friday, December 4, 2009
George Washington University, Washington, DC

TRACK D: THE SCIENCE OF SUSTAINABILITY: URBAN ECOLOGY AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Session D2. *Lawns, Landscapes and Identity: What Can Current Landscape Practices Tell Us about the Adoption of New Stormwater Techniques*

Dr. David Myers, University of Maryland

- I. Lawn: An urban problem driven by economic social structure
- II. Interesting statistics:
 - A. 79% (85 million) households are involved in lawn care/ gardening (2002 NGA Harris Poll)
 - B. Lawn and garden sales annual growth of 8% (96 billion dollars)
 - C. Of lawn and garden sales consumers were 35-44 years old and 55+ years old, college graduates, married, 2 person households with annual incomes of 75K.
- III. Lawn and identity
 - A. Lawn is a visual cue to status
 - B. In 1940, a few dandelions are okay in the lawn
 - C. By 1955 dandelions are no longer okay in the lawn because post WWII chemicals are adopted by baby boomers and pushed by advertisers for lawn care.
 - D. Lawns reflect the shared community identity found in typical suburban residential environments:
 1. Conformity
 2. Community status
 - E. Lawns reflect the individual identity found in typical suburban residential environments:
 1. Territoriality
 2. Individual status
 3. Masculinity
 - F. Lawns represent:
 1. Play
 2. Security
 3. Utility
 - G. Lawns are part of an aesthetic of care. "We care, therefore we mow our lawns."
 - H. Lawns are a culture of consumption and a culture of contamination.

- IV. Research by speaker in 1999 demonstrated community 'hands on' practices accomplished the only significant impact on change in lawn culture as compared to direct mail campaigns.
- V. How do we change the norm of our society? ("Rebranding" the lawn)
 - A. The more educated you are the more likely you are to pollute
 - B. Policy makers creating change:
 - 1. Garden Club of America's criteria for lawn services
 - 2. Choptank River Eastern Bay Conservancy's 'Badge of Dishonor' for over-fertilized/ fertilized lawns
- VI. Eliminate the sources, not the lawn
 - A. Control, change, eliminate fertilizers
 - B. Reduce, eliminate pesticides
- VII. The change in cultural norms must begin with the political will of some individual to change a regulation, which may or may not be enforced but it may at least have some impact.

[Summary prepared by Kara Bowne Crissey]