

Fact Sheet The Chesapeake Bay

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest and one of the most productive estuaries in the United States. It holds about 15 trillion gallons of water – enough to fill 25 million Olympic-sized swimming pools. About half of this water comes from salt water of the Atlantic Ocean. The other half flows into the Bay as freshwater runoff from the 64,000 square miles of land that surround it.

The main Bay itself is approximately 200 miles long, with 11,684 miles of shoreline and more than 50 major rivers that feed into it. Yet, its average depth of 21 feet makes it a relatively shallow body of water. This shallowness, combined with fresh, brackish and salt waters, creates an alive and diverse Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay's complex ecosystem of land and water provides important social, economic and ecological benefits for the nearly 17 million people that live in the region – along its shores and streams and in its forests, farms and cities. Annually, more than 500 million pounds of seafood worth more than \$850 million come from the Bay.

In addition to its value to people, the Bay and its rivers, streams and lands offer an incredible number of habitats and food webs for a broad variety of wildlife. These habitats create homes, food and protection for more than 3,600 species of diverse plants, fish and animals, including the Bay's signature critter, the blue crab. The Bay's ecosystem is also critically important to birds of all kinds, including 29 species of waterfowl – many of which stop to rest and feed as they migrate through the area each year.

To learn about conservation landscaping and how to help improve the Chesapeake Bay starting in your own backyard, visit www.PlantMorePlants.com.



*The Chesapeake Bay Program is a unique regional partnership that has coordinated the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed since 1983. "Plant More Plants" is the second personal stewardship campaign created by Bay Program partners under the umbrella of The Chesapeake Club. This campaign, along with the earlier "Save the Crabs then Eat 'Em" campaign, strives to share with residential homeowners practices that are beneficial to their lifestyle and to the Chesapeake Bay. The Chesapeake Club campaigns are brought to you by the individuals from the following organizations and localities: **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Turfgrass Council, Chesapeake Bay Program, Chesterfield County, Henrico County, Hanover County, the City of Richmond, HR STORM, District of Columbia Department of the Environment, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Maryland Department of the Environment.***