



NOVEMBER 2009

*The Lafayette River and  
Your Lawn*

By Karen Mayne

***Hello! My name is Karen Mayne, your neighbor on Suburban Arch. I have volunteered to write an environmental column about the Suburban Acres neighborhood. I hope this will be another way for us to work together to keep our neighborhood beautiful – by thinking a little about the natural world with which we share our space.***

Fall is the time when trees are starting their winter hibernation period . just as we do when the weather gets cold. As the temperatures drop, so do the leaves and pine needles. We can make sure we don't contribute to the filling in of the Lafayette River by keeping those leaves and limbs away from the shoreline of creeks and marshes. And, we shouldn't rake leaves into the gutters, where they can clog our storm drains and get into our creeks. Leaves and pine straw make excellent (and free) mulch if you use the bagger on your lawnmower. Or, you can just run over the leaves several times with your lawnmower and mulch them right back into the lawn, where they will add nitrogen to the soil.

Many of us become rescue farmers+this time of year, as we fertilize and use herbicides and pesticides on our lawns. According to the *Bay Journal*, the largest crop+ in the Chesapeake Bay watershed isn't corn or soybeans . it's turf grass! More than 3.8 million acres of grass receive 215 million pounds of nitrogen fertilizer and 19 million pounds of pesticides each year in the Bay region. Used properly, these chemicals keep our lawns pretty and green. But if used improperly, they can end up in the Lafayette River, or harm good insects, birds, and the bees that pollinate so many plants. Consider whether you can tolerate a few weeds and bugs. And, like all good farmers, we can get free advice on lawn management from a variety of sources.

The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service from Virginia Tech provides free advice on gardening, trees and lawns at [www.ext.vt.edu](http://www.ext.vt.edu). For a small fee, they will analyze your soil and give recommendations for the proper amount of fertilizer or lime to use. Our local extension agent is Lynette Swanson and she can be reached at 683-2816 or [lswanson@vt.edu](mailto:lswanson@vt.edu). The Norfolk Master Gardeners also provide free advice through their website [www.norfolkmg.org](http://www.norfolkmg.org). Local garden centers often give free lawn seminars in the fall and spring.

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**JANUARY 2010**  
**Recycling**

**By Karen Mayne**

Have you made any New Year's resolutions? Many of us do. Here is one resolution that will help both the environment and your pocketbook, and it doesn't involve the size of your waistline!

Most of us have heard the phrase "reduce, reuse, and recycle," and we know about the materials we can put into the City's blue recycling carts. But we may not think about reducing and reusing the things in our life. Each year, the average Norfolk resident creates 1825 pounds of waste (that's almost a ton!). Everything plastic . . . whether a plastic bag or bottle, synthetic fabrics and carpet, and even car parts . . . is made from hydrocarbons mined from oil, natural gas, or coal.

Everything metal . . . from silverware to vacuum cleaners . . . is made from metals mined somewhere in the world. Mining of hydrocarbons and metals not only uses up limited natural resources that can never be replaced, it also causes environmental and social disruption in many regions around the globe. So, before buying something new, think about whether what you have can still serve a little longer (and that will save some money!).

When it is time to get rid of something, think about whether it could be reused to serve a needy family for some time longer. We have many thrift stores in our area that will take clothes and household goods, and many of them will pick up at your home. Habitat for Humanity has a program that will take surplus or still usable construction materials (everything from sinks to siding) . . . they are located at 900 Tidewater Drive and can be reached at 640-0590, ext. 217 or [www.shrhabitat.org](http://www.shrhabitat.org). Mailing stores, such as the UPS store at Southern Shopping Center, take back plastic packing peanuts, and grocery stores usually take back plastic bags.

Recycling is the last %+for our New Year's resolution. The recycling industry employs 1.1 million workers nationwide and is a \$236 billion a year industry. Our local recycling saves space in the SPSA landfill . . . something we all should be concerned about! And, every time you put out your recycling cart (even if it isn't full), the City %counts+the cart towards our neighborhood's participation rate for the EARNN program (Environmental Awards for Recycling in Norfolk Neighborhoods), and that earns us points towards our annual goal of getting \$750 from the City for our civic league.

Reduce, reuse, and recycle. Now, that's one resolution that is easy to keep and will help the planet!

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## **FEBRUARY 2010**

### **Children and Nature**

February is for Lovers! In addition to Valentine's Day, February is heart month, a reminder to take care of our hearts. Valentine's Day makes us think of our lovers and heart month makes us think about our elders, but let's also think about the kids we love.

In 2005, Richard Louv wrote the groundbreaking book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Since then, the nationwide movement "No Child Left Inside" has sprung up to get children outside, rather than just at the computer or TV screen. No doubt many of us adults in Suburban Acres grew up spending a lot of time outside. Can we say that about our children (especially girls) today?

For most of history, humans had a close connection to the outdoors . for our livelihoods and food. Research shows we still need that close relationship to thrive. Examples?

Children with attention deficit disorder are calmer after spending time outside, patients need fewer painkillers after surgery if their bed has a view of the outside, prisoners who tend gardens show less violence, and women with breast cancer do better when they participate in gardening.

So let's get our kids outside! The weather will start warming up in March. We are lucky to have many natural areas within Norfolk and close by. We have the beaches, the Lafayette Park and Virginia Zoo, Norfolk Botanical Gardens, Weyanoke Nature Preserve, Back Bay and Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuges, First Landing State Park, Northwest River City Park, to name a few, and playgrounds and neighborhood parks. Many groups sponsor canoe and birding trips and hikes. We have lots of lakes to fish in, and of course, the Chesapeake Bay is all around.

You don't have to drive somewhere to get kids outside. The Children & Nature Network ([www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)) is a great website for ideas and more information. They suggest simple ideas such as counting bugs around your porch light on a summer night, digging up earthworms after a rain, or growing a cherry tomato plant in a pot by your door. Marigold flowers are simple to grow from seed and are a great way to show kids how plants grow. And what about spending time outside in our beautiful neighborhood with its trees and large yards?

Let's connect the kids we love with nature . it's a heritage they deserve to enjoy.

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A meaningful human relationship with nature, shaped in children's formative years, is crucial to our society's practice of stewardship, its sense of community, and the strength of family bonds. We also believe that natural play will increasingly be recognized as a key element in any successful effort to turn the tide on child obesity.+

—Richard Louv, January 2009



APRIL 2011

*Inaugural Riverfest  
Celebrate the Lafayette River  
on April 30, 2011!*

**By Karen Mayne**

The Lafayette River is our home river. The Suburban Acres Civic League neighborhood sits at its headwaters and plays an important part in its health. Enjoy a day on the river and join with other residents to kick-off a new City-wide restoration program to ***make the Lafayette safe for swimming and fishing by 2014.*** Learn how to become a River Star Home and earn a FREE yard flag to let others know you care about the river! Proceeds from the festival will benefit oyster reef and other restoration projects in the Lafayette.

### **Lafayette RIVERFest**

**Saturday, April 30, 2011**

**10:00 am to 4:00 pm**

**(Rain Date: May 1, Noon to 4:00 pm)**

**Colonial Place Waterfront, 500 Block of Mayflower Road, Norfolk**

This day of FAMILY FUN includes: Live Music, Costumed Dog Parades, Free Canoeing & Kayaking, Catch & Release Fishing Tournament, Scoop-the-Poop Relay Race, Canoe and Kayak Races, Children's Art & Games, Rain Barrel Workshop, River Art, Green Gardening Stations, Learning Barge Tours, PLUS lots of other fun and educational activities, and Fresh Local Fare!

Come by small boat, bike, or walk. Satellite car parking will be available.

Some of these events require advanced registration. For more information on RIVERFest, (including times and a map of event locations and parking), call the Elizabeth River Project at 757-399-7487 for a festival brochure, or visit their website at [www.elizabethriver.org/LafayetteRiverFest2011](http://www.elizabethriver.org/LafayetteRiverFest2011).

If you can't make it to the festival, there are plenty of things you can do to help restore the Lafayette River. Stay tuned for next month's column on ways you can help. Here's a hint: don't fertilize your fescue lawn this spring. Wait until the fall. It will be healthier for the grass and for the Lafayette!

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