

## **Yes, You CAN Help Save the Bay!**

Most of us succeed in being good citizens, especially in our own part of the world. That assertion is easily proven by adding up all the volunteer hours that benefit our counties! Chesapeake Bay may be a world treasure but it is more directly the responsibility of those of us who live near it.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation has launched a program, open to all, that truly will impact the health of the Bay. No, you do not need to live near water to participate in growing wild celery, a type of underwater grass. This grass can be grown in a small tub at your home and when transplanted provides food and shelter for young crabs, rockfish, speckled trout, shellfish, and many more aquatic creatures essential to the Bay ecosystem.

If you are as edgy as I am purchasing food from Indonesian or Chinese fish farms, you will want to do what you can to furnish a nursery for baby species right here at home. The Gloucester workshop, "Grasses for the Masses" will take place on Saturday morning, February 20, 2010 at Whitcomb Lodge, Beaverdam Park from 10 to 12:30. This is a wonderfully convenient time and place to begin your own nursery. Everything will be explained in detail and you will be given all the materials needed for this 10-week project. At the end of that time your celery grass will be ready for planting in our local rivers.

What an ideal opportunity this is to bring your son or daughter with you so they see first hand what a single person can do to make a difference. They also know a fun activity when they see one! Helping a parent must be worth some sort of badge, don't you think? You can tell them this grass provides food for ducks, geese, and swans as well as helping to clear the water and stabilize the sediments that are already on the bottom of the Bay.

When planted in rivers these grasses remove a lot of pollution before it reaches the Bay: grasses are also valuable in slowing wave action and reducing shoreline erosion. They produce oxygen necessary for aquatic life and take up nitrogen and phosphorus pollution that can cause fish kills, algal blooms, and dead zones in the Bay.

Scientists estimate that there were once hundreds of thousands of acres of underwater grasses, now reduced to a pitiful 59,000 acres, a loss accelerated by pollution. It is time for us to get off the 'save the Bay' bumper sticker and get involved! It does cost \$40 but the rewards are great. The fee helps to continue the program and provide equipment for grass growers across Virginia.

There is little work involved in watching grass grow but you will truly help to save the Bay. To reserve a spot at the workshop e-mail Bill Walker at [wcwalker@inna.net](mailto:wcwalker@inna.net). For more information visit [www.cbf.org/grasses](http://www.cbf.org/grasses) or phone Bill Walker 804-693-6540.

In the more than 40 years I've lived here I've read about myriad efforts to save the Bay. And still the Bay is not saved! All the efforts of planners and scientists, legislatures and organizations dedicated to that purpose have failed. One reason is the tremendous increase in population in the watershed, which extends hundreds of miles landward, creating a problem that only people can remedy perhaps.

Several states, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, for example, have tried legislatively but there is no political will to fix the problem. Remedies require regulation and money, tax money, words that have acquired Victorian 'unmentionable' status in our age. However, we the people can make the essential difference so that a renewed fishing industry can benefit the entire region. Perhaps in your child's lifetime the Bay will once again teem with healthy oysters and crabs and when your grandchild holds a pole over the water, there will be a fish to bite!