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The Path to a Healthier Landscape

YARDSCAPING — INCORPORATING THE CONCEPT that healthy and beautiful landscapes can be created and maintained through ecologically based practices — is coming to Back Cove in Portland, Maine. After several years of planning and fund raising, the Maine YardScaping Partnership, a statewide alliance of businesses, government agencies and environmental groups, has begun work on its first public YardScape — two and a half acres along the shore of Back Cove, donated by the city of Portland. The YardScape will showcase a series of gardens appropriate for urban, suburban and rural settings, and demonstrate how homeowners can easily design and install low-maintenance lawns and landscapes that reduce pesticide and fertilizer use, decrease water usage and runoff, promote native and non-invasive plants, support wildlife, and create a healthier environment.

By early summer, the first phase of the project was almost complete: the Maine Conservation Corps, Portland Parks and Recreation Department and Maine master gardeners constructed two-thirds of the 1,000-foot-long, seven-foot-wide walking path that will wind through the gardens. The path links to the existing Back Cove Trail, which is very popular with hikers and bikers. The path surface changes appropriately from stone dust to superhumus according to the setting: urban/suburban or rural.

The Maine YardScaping Partnership was formed in response to a rising concern about yard-care chemicals washing into bodies of water, as well as the risks of pesticide exposure to people, pets and wildlife. For more information on the Back Cove project and YardScaping, go to www.yardscaping.org.

— Paul Schlein, Augusta, Maine

- 1) The Back Cove YardScaping demonstration site before work was started.
- 2) Maine Conservation Corps workers laying out the path. 3) Roughing out the route.
- 4) Master gardener volunteers loading superhumus for the rural section of the path.
- 5) The path with superhumus in place.