

Give the lake a break! Create a buffer garden

A buffer garden is a planted or wild vegetated area along the lake that functions to filter runoff, capture pollutants before they reach the lake, separate human and pet activity from the water, and provide a wildlife habitat. A buffer garden is a “living filter.” Avoid having your lawn extend directly to the water.

Some examples:



Create a buffer between your lawn and the lake! Or, just don't mow the shore line!

Storm water run-off

Storm water run-off is the single largest contributor to water quality degradation in Massachusetts. Pollutants carried by run off that cause the most concern are sediment, nutrients and pathogens, all three of which can be captured by a buffer garden.



Major pollutants from home gardens & lawns include fertilizers, pesticides and pet droppings.



Major pollutants from driveways and roads include sand, salt, oil and antifreeze

BENEFITS OF BUFFER GARDENS TO THE LAKE:

- Capture pollution
- Provide wildlife habitat (turtles, birds)

BENEFITS TO YOU, THE HOMEOWNER:

- Erosion control
- Wildlife attraction
- Goose barrier – (Geese like to have a wide, unobstructed view and close and easy access to the water to escape predators. Although lawns are a favorite food, geese will not travel through tall grasses or dense vegetation to get to food. Buffer gardens keep them off your lawn!

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING A BUFFER GARDEN:

- Maintain accessibility to lake
- Maintain view of lake
- Provide color throughout growing season
- Low maintenance



HOW TO PLAN YOUR BUFFER GARDEN:

- Draw a site map noting structures, driveway, walkways, frontage and areas of activity, trees and other vegetation.
- Observe water runoff patterns on your property during a heavy rainstorm and note the problem areas. Even small areas of buffer garden will help.
- Consider harsh winter winds that blow across your property that can dry out the leaves or needles of evergreens (mountain laurel, pines, spruce). What you already have growing in undeveloped areas around your property are helpful indicators of the type of plants that will succeed.
- The deeper the root system of plants, the better the chances of capturing soluble nutrients and other pollutants in subsurface flow.
- Before starting to dig, lay out plants to ensure there are enough, with the right spacing. Spacing may vary, but generally plant them at least 3 feet apart ... leaving room to grow without crowding. The space in-between can be planted with ferns, flowers or groundcover during the early years.
- All new plants require some artificial watering during the first growing season, but when planting in the very early spring or fall when the environment is cool and moist requires far less watering than planting during the warm growing season. In addition, planting in the early spring or fall, when growing processes are shut down, will give plants time to acclimate to their new surroundings.

Even just creating a “no mow” zone along the lake will allow a more diverse mix of vegetation to grow! Let nature do the work.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING NATIVE PLANTS FOR YOUR BUFFER GARDEN

NATIVE GROUND COVERS:



- Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) 1' full sun, handsome foliage, good groundcover
- Virginia Creeper – sun, full/part shade, grows low along ground, up trees, fences, rock walls
- Bunchberry / Creeping Dogwood (*Cornus canadensis*) 6" full/part shade, berries attract birds, showy white spring flowers, red summer berries, purplish fall color. Excellent ground cover
- Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*) 4" full/part shade, flowers, fruits, glossy aromatic foliage
- Partridge Berry (*Mitchella repens*) 2" full/part shade, white flowers in June, red berries late summer-fall
- Christmas Fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) 1' full/part shade, evergreen ground cover; glossy foliage
- Cinnamon Fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*) 3-4' full/part shade, handsome foliage; cinnamon-colored, fertile fronds
- Sensitive Fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*) 2' full/part shade, fertile fronds used in dried arrangements

NATIVE PERENNIALS:



- Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium*) 1' full sun, stiff, grass-like with blue-violet flowers
- Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*) 1-2' full sun, early yellow flowers
- Wild lupine (*Lupinus perennis*) 1-3' full sun, purple-blue flower spires in June; pretty foliage
- Daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*) 1-4' full sun, white ray flower with yellow center, attracts butterflies
- Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) 2-4' full sun, brilliant red flowers attracts hummingbirds
- Blue Flag Iris (*Iris versicolor*) 1-3' full sun, showy purple-blue flowers in late spring
- Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*) 2' full sun, forms low turf on sunny dry soils
- Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) 1-3' full/part shade & full sun, orange flowers in summer; attracts hummingbirds, butterflies
- Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*) 1' full/part shade, small star-like flowers in a loose spike
- Twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*) 6" full/part shade, trailing plant, white and pink flowers
- Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) 1' full/part shade, delicate with blue-lavender bell-shaped flowers

NATIVE LOW GROWING SHRUBS:



- Lowbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*) 1-2' full/part shade & full sun , flowers, fruits attract birds, scarlet fall color, good ground cover
- Maple Leaf Viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*) 3-6' full/part shade & full sun, fruits attract birds, attractive foliage, good fall color
- Steeplebush (*Spiraea tomenosa*) 4' full/part shade & full sun, spires of pink flowers
- Sweetfern (*Comptonia peregrine*) 2-4' full/part shade & full sun, gray green aromatic fern-like leaves
- Pasture juniper (*Juniperus communis*) 1-4' full sun, foliage, good ground cover
- Rhodora Azalea (*Rhododendron canadense*) 3-4' full sun, very showy rose purple flowers
- Sweet Gale (*Myrica gale*) 2-4' full sun, aromatic foliage

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