Choosing Plants, Shrubs and Trees for Your Shoreline

Native Plants to Consider When Creating a Buffer Along Water

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MICHIGAN FORESTRY Assistance Program

What to Avoid!

What to Create!

Leelanau Conservation District

Offering bare root native trees, shrubs
and perennial plants since ?

- Annual April Native Tree and Shrub Seedling Sale
- Annual May Native Plant Sale
- Affordable way to plant large areas for reforestation, windbreaks/living fences, wildlife habitat, erosion control, absorb wave energy, discourage geese/ducks…
- On-site recommendations: site evaluation, species selection and planting information – at no charge!
- Coordinating with landscape contractors

Lower Shoreline

below the ordinary high water mark (OHWM)
only native Michigan species may be planted here - MDEQ

Bulrush

- Grass-like leaves
- 6-8’ Tall
- Dense, Spreading
- Plant right into water’s edge

Lower Shoreline

Blue Flag Iris

- Bloom: May – July
- Height: 2 – 3’
- Wet to moist soil
- Full sun to partial shade
- Naturally found in wet meadows

Lower Shoreline

Buttonbush

- Multi-stemmed shrub
- Height 6’
- Unusually round, fragrant flowers
- Nectar source
- Full sun to part shade

Other native plants:

- Sweet Flag
- Water Plantain
- White Water Lily
- Arrow Arum
- Arrowhead
- Common Bur-reed
- Pickerel Weed

Shoreline

Between water level and OHWM

Cardinal Flower

- **Bloom: July – September**
- **Height: 2 – 4’**
- **Natural habitat – streambanks & swamps**
- **Full sun to filtered shade**
- **Attracts hummingbirds**
- **Poisonous**

Shoreline

Great Blue Lobelia

- Bloom: July – September
- Height: 1 – 3’
- Full sun to partial shade
- Naturally found in rich lowland woods, meadows, marshes, and streambanks

Shoreline

Joe Pye Weed

- Bloom: August – September
- Height: 4 – 6’
- Prefers full sun in a moist soil
- Will grow in partial shade

Shoreline

Red Osier Dogwood

- Red multi-stemmed shrub
- Flowers: June
- Fruit: August-October
- Height: 3 – 6’
- Full sun to part shade

Shoreline

Ninebark

- Multi-stemmed shrub
- Whitish-pink flowers: June
- Red fruit capsules
- Full sun to partial shade
- Height 10’

Other native plants:

- Boneset
- Swamp milkweed
- Silky dogwood
- Speckled alder
- Black willow
- Eastern cottonwood

Upper Shoreline

above the OHWM

Switch Grass

- Height: 2 – 7’
- Deep rooted: 10 – 11
- Broad range of soils
- Very nutritious – palatability declines at maturity

Upper Shoreline

above the OHWM

Heliopsis

- Also known as Smooth Oxeye, member of the sunflower family
- Bloom: July – August
- Height: 3 - 4’
- Spreads prolifically

Upper Shoreline

Highbush Cranberry

- Found along streams, open or lightly shaded swamps & wet grounds
- Moderate shade-tolerant
- Flowers: May - June
- Fruit: September, persistent

Upper Shoreline

Marram Grass

- Found on Lake Michigan shoreline
- Spreading
- Drought/sand tolerant
- 1-3’ in height
- Full sun

Upper Shoreline

Bearberry

- Found on Lake Michigan shoreline
- Full sun
- Spreading
- Drought/light traffic tolerant

Other native plants:

- Butterfly weed
- Elderberry
- Bergamot
- Indian grass
- Serviceberry
- Hazelnut
- Common Witchhazel
- White pine
- Black cherry
- White oak

Shoreline-Upper Shoreline

Many More Species to consider:

- Sky Blue Aster
- Marsh Blazing Star
- Spiderwort
- New England Aster
- Indian Grass
- Culver's Root
- Swamp Buttercup
- Ferns
- Nannyberry
- Arrowwood Viburnum
- Elderberry
- Hazelnut
- Blueberries
- Serviceberry
- Or we'll help you find a suitable native species!

Native Grasses for Filters

Little Bluestem

- Root depth: 5 – 8’
- Drought tolerant
- Valuable for erosion control
- Height: 3’
- Beautiful bronze-orange fall color

Native Grasses for Filters

Big Bluestem

- Height: 2 – 6’
- Quality forage
- Only 1/3 of plant is above ground – deep root

Native Grasses for Filters

Indian Grass

- Height: 3 – 10’
- Deep root system, drought tolerant
- Erosion control
- Prefers moist soil in full sun
- Used as an ornamental grass
- Palatable when young, less so as it ages

Native Grasses for Filters

Prairie Dropseed

- Easy to grow
- Clump-forming
- All soil types
- Full sun to partial shade
- Drought tolerant
- Seed heads fragrant
- Attracts birds

Native Trees to Plant

- Northern White Cedar
- Balsam Fir
- Eastern Hemlock
- Black Spruce
- Swamp White Oak
- Red Maple
- Shagbark Hickory
- Hackberry
- Willow
- Yellow and White Birch
- Aspen

Edible Riparian Buffers

- Mix of species produces a range of fruit and nuts
- Attractive to pollinators
- Fun!

American Elderberry, Mulberry, American Hazelnut,…

Natural Resource Education – a mission of the Conservation District

- Present at Lake Association events
- On-site visits
- Articles for newsletters
- Workshops
- Plant sales
- Your ideas for how we can help your communities?

Contact Us:

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