Shoreline Buffer Zone

The Shoreland Buffer Plan includes step-by-step instructions to help you prepare and install the buffer zone on your property. You may choose to do the project yourself or present the designs to landscapers for bids.

The plan includes a site diagram that indicates the location and dimensions of the planting. Because this project may be paid in part through a state grant, the buffer extent indicated on the diagram is a minimum planting depth. The area of maintained lawn may be no more than 30 feet wide on each parcel.

Native plants from the Polk County lists must be used for the planting. These perennial species are well-adapted to the climate in this area and are integral parts of the local ecosystems. Once established, they will require little or no maintenance. Their deep root systems will stabilize the soil to prevent erosion and encourage infiltration along their root channels. Native plants will also provide habitat for wildlife, as well as attract birds and butterflies to your property. However, they will require initial maintenance. Watering and weeding are especially important for a successful planting.

The individual plant species were chosen based on the conditions of soil moisture and sunlight specific to your site. You may make substitutions, but only from the native plant lists provided. The species vary in their colors and bloom times so that your native plantings should have flowers in bloom throughout the summer. Some pictures of the plants are included on the enclosed plant lists. You might also go to bluethumb.org and look at their native plant finder. Wildflower and native plant books also provide photographs.

The steps to complete the project follow.

***Site Preparation***

1. **Kill existing lawn grass with herbicide**. Wait at least 7 to 10 days after treatment to be certain that vegetation is dead before planting native plants. The treated turf should be brown in color; if it is still green or yellow-green, a repeated application is recommended.
	* A glyphosate herbicide like Roundup® is recommended. This herbicide will only affect plants directly sprayed, and will break down into harmless substances rapidly.
	* Timing of herbicide application is crucial; do not apply when rain is forecast within the next 24 hours or on a windy day.
	* When applying herbicide, shield and spray around existing native plants and trees. Avoid drift of herbicide into the lake.
2. **Leave the dead grass in place**. It will act as mulch for the new plantings by holding moisture, anchoring soil, reducing weed growth, and contributing organic matter to the soil.
3. **Set up a watering system**. Watering will be essential to ensure the survival and success of your shoreline buffer zone. The watering system should be in place before you begin any seeding or planting.

***Planting Seedlings***

Early summer (May 20 – June 15) is a good time to plant. For late summer plantings, mid-August to mid-September are the best times. It will be ok to plant through the end of September. If you end up waiting until next summer to plant, early June would be best. Most small seedlings should be planted approximately 12 inches apart. Planting the seedlings in clumps of 3 to 7 will increase the impact of the flowers and create a more natural appearance.

1. Lay mulch down prior to planting. Mulch will conserve moisture and reduce weed growth within the planting area. Wood chips (2 inches deep), straw, or fallen leaves (each 3-4 inches deep) may be used as mulch. Straw or leaves are recommended for your buffer zone area.
2. Be ready to water. Watering plants is critical to their success. Be ready with hoses and sprinklers before you begin to plant.
3. Dig holes for plants. This will speed up planting. A bulb planter or bulb auger drill bit attached to an electric drill work well.
4. Amend the soil in the planting hole. A small amount of organic, phosphorus-free soil amendment is recommended. Plant Tone® and Milorganite® are two examples. The second number on the label indicates the percentage of phosphorus. For a 6-0-6 NPK ratio, place a teaspoon in each plant hole. Avoid over-applying, as excess nutrients will encourage weed growth.
5. Place live plants in the ground soon after they are brought to the site. If you must keep them a few days before planting, keep them in an area with partial sun, such as on the east side of a building or under a deciduous tree. Do no leave them in a dark area for long periods; this will weaken plants. Water once or twice a day to keep packs moist.
6. Plant in the cool hours of the day. Plants will have a greater survival rate if planted on a cool day or during the morning or evening hours. To plant, separate the mulch, dig a hole, sprinkle soil amendment, place the plant plug in the hole, press the soil gently around the plug, and replace the mulch, being careful to keep mulch ½ inch from the stem of plants.
7. Water immediately after planting. Plan to water daily for the first few weeks or until the plants are well established. If plants wilt or droop, a repeated watering during the day may be necessary. Once plants are established, water only if prolonged dry periods occur.

***Planting Shrubs***

Shrubs can be planted from mid May through late October. It is especially important to purchase shrubs using their scientific names to ensure that you are purchasing the native varieties. Many cultivated varieties—such as honeysuckles—can be invasive.

1. Dig a hole deeply enough so that the roots won’t curl or bunch up. The shrubs should be planted about one-half inch deeper than they were in the nursery. Paler colored bark and a slight swelling on the step mark the old soil line.
2. Pack soil firmly but gently around the roots with your foot. Air pockets left around the roots will dry them out.
3. Water regularly to keep soil moist but not saturated.

Native Plant Retailers

There are a number of nurseries in the area that specialize in native plant species. The prices and availability of particular species may vary.

Dragonfly Gardens

Amery, Wisconsin

715-268-7660

www.dragonflygardens.net

Landscape Alternatives

Shafer, Minnesota

651-257-4460

www.landscapealternatives.com

Prairie Restoration

Scandia, Minnesota

651-433-1437

www.prairieresto.com