

Sit back and relax!

Let nature do the work for you.



Photo from Washington Conservation District

Do you ever wish there were more time in the day?

Sit back, relax, and let nature care for your shoreline property. That's right - we're giving you permission to let your yard run a little wild.

Many people feel pressure to keep their yards tidy by mowing the grass down to the water's edge, building retaining walls or removing shrubs and tall grasses. In reality, a buffer of native plants including flowers, grasses, shrubs and trees is easier to maintain, helps to prevent erosion and keeps the water cleaner. You can still have a dock or trail for access to the water, but by leaving the majority of your shoreline in its natural state, you will limit your maintenance time and costs, keep your yard from slowly eroding away, and provide a beautiful habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife.

Protect Your Shoreline and Wetland Buffers

Vegetated buffers protect lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands from pollution, provide habitat for birds and other wildlife and beautify their surroundings. Even storm ponds need a vegetated buffer to prevent erosion and keep geese away. For this reason, many local cities and watersheds have rules to protect wetland and shoreline buffers. Below are a few tips for loving living on the water's edge:

Do preserve native plants along the water's edge. Native vegetation in the east metro includes maple, basswood and oak trees, as well as prairie grasses and forbs. Adjacent to water, trees such as willows and cottonwoods thrive. There are also aquatic edge plants like cattail, reeds and sedges.

Do give your buffer a helping hand by removing invasive species such as purple loosestrife, reed canary grass and buckthorn.

Do visit www.BlueThumb.org or contact the Washington Conservation District for information about cost-share grants to help you create a vegetated buffer if your shoreline currently consists of turf grass, beach or riprap.

Don't mow within buffers.

Don't dump grass clippings, yard waste or anything else in the buffer.

Don't build any structures, clear land or create impervious surface within fifty feet of a river, lake, wetland or storm pond without first calling your city to find out if buffer rules apply.



Before: This yard was tidy, but required lots of upkeep.



After: A buffer of native grasses and flowers attracts birds and butterflies, adds visual interest to the yard and reduces the amount of lawn to mow.



Photos from Rice Creek Water Shed District

For more information on shoreline plantings, visit www.BlueThumb.org



Love living on the water's edge?

Learn how buffers can protect lakes, rivers, wetlands and storm ponds

