

## Talking about Lakeshore Living

On Thursday, Dec. 27, a group of six homeowners living along Forest Lake met with myself and Great River Greening intern Ellie Rogers to discuss lakeshore landscaping. The purpose of the focus group session was to find out how people feel about shorelines planted with native plants versus shorelines landscaped with rock walls, rip rap, beach or turf grass.

During the discussion, the homeowners listed ease of access to the water, tidy appearance and ability to resist ice heaves as advantages of rip rap, beach or turf grass. Rock walls, they noted, were more difficult to maintain and were often ruined by ice heaves. The advantages of native plants that they mentioned were a more natural looking yard, ability to control runoff and beauty.

We showed the group two different pictures of lakeshore yards planted with native species, one with a “wilder” look and one designed to look more like a lake side garden, The majority of the group liked the tidier look for the native plants and agreed that they would like to have something similar on their properties. The “wilder” yard was less popular, although one woman commented that on a different lake where less of the lots were developed that wilder look would be fine.

A common theme throughout the discussion was a desire for their lakeshore property to be attractive. The group seemed very open to the possibility of landscaping with native plants, but worried mostly about not knowing how to do it right. Although they all said that a financial incentive would help, they were more interested in finding resources on lakeshore landscaping and advice from experts on how to landscape their yards. Interestingly, many of the group members commented that government sponsored lakeshore restoration projects often place little importance in the aesthetic appearance of their plantings. In contrast, the Forest Lake homeowners expressed an interest in native plantings that would provide water quality benefits and be attractive.

Ellie plans to use the findings from this focus group study to create a survey, which will be sent out to homeowners along Forest Lake later this spring.



The lakeshore homeowners were somewhat concerned with the “wild” look of this native planting, although some thought it would work for a less developed lake.



The group preferred the appearance of this native planting, although some wondered if it would provide any water quality benefits.

### Members of the East Metro Water Resource Education Program:

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