Some Native Plants for Lakeshore Landscaping

**Joe Pye**
-Eupatorium maculatum
-Ht: 36"  Flower: Purple  Bloom: July-September
-Habitat: Full sun to part shade.  Wet to moist soils.

**Little Bluestem**
-Schizachyrium scoparium
-Ht: 36"  Flower: Amber  Bloom: July-September
-Habitat: Full sun to part shade.  Moist to dry soils.

**Fringed Sedge**
-Carex crinita
-Ht: 36"  Flower: Green  Bloom: May-June
-Habitat: Full sun to part shade.  Wet to moist soils.

**Northern Blazing Star**
-Liatris ligulistylis
-Ht: 36"  Flower: Purple  Bloom: July-August
-Habitat: Full sun to full shade.  Moist to wet soils.

**Marsh Milkweed**
-Asclepias incarnata
-Ht: 36"  Flower: Purple  Bloom: June-August
-Habitat: Full sun to part shade.  Wet to moist soils.

**Blue Flag Iris**
-Iris versicolor
-Ht: 36"  Flower: Blue  Bloom: June-July
-Habitat: Full sun to part shade.  Wet to moist soils.

**Green-headed Coneflower**
-Rudbeckia laciniata
-Ht: 48"  Flower: Yellow  Bloom: July-September
-Habitat: Full sun to part shade.  Wet to moist soils.

**Fox Sedge**
-Carex vulpinoidea
-Ht: 24"  Flower: Green  Bloom: May-June
-Habitat: Full sun to part shade.  Wet to moist soils.

**Technical Assistance**

Expert assistance may be available to homeowners wishing to determine the best methods for managing their shoreline for fish, wildlife, and water quality. Assistance may include on-site consultations, project design, cost estimation, and guidance throughout project installation and maintenance. Contact your respective conservation district for assistance (see list below).

**Cost-Share Grants**

Cost-share grants may be available from your conservation district for restoring shorelines with native vegetation and correcting or preventing shoreline erosion (see list below). Grants can pay 50-75% for plants and other materials on projects that will provide benefits to the lake, and therefore the public.

**Permits**

Contact the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for information on required permits for shoreline projects.
http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/permits/water or 651-296-6157
Permits may also be needed from cities/townships or watershed districts.
Locate any utilities in the area before you dig (Gopher One-Call - 651-454-0002).
Healthy Lakes

Healthy, desirable lakes have diverse plant communities, robust fisheries, and accommodate various types of recreation. The most important part of any lake is the near-shore area. The shoreline is critical for fisheries, water quality, and the lake’s overall ecology. Property values and lake enjoyment are closely tied to these same things. But the shoreline is also where our activities have the greatest potential to affect the lake. This places special responsibility upon lakeshore homeowners. There are also special challenges to lakeshore landscaping, including wave action, ice jacking, muskrats, and others. Fortunately, there are special landscaping approaches that are attractive and functional for both the homeowner and the lake ecosystem.

Lakeshore Landscaping Principles

- Create an “outdoor room” with defined boundaries and features of interest.
- Avoid large empty spaces which are uncomfortable, just as empty indoor spaces are uncomfortable.
- Frame your view of the lake by placing taller features on the sides, shorter in the middle.
- Use curved lines that are more appealing than straight lines and sharp angles.
- Create a flowing transition of native vegetation between manicured areas and the lake.
- Use soft engineering to prevent or correct shoreline erosion.
- Use native plants through custom plantings, or by favoring those growing naturally.
- Preserve in-lake vegetation because it is critical for fish, wildlife, and water quality.
- Coordinate with your neighbors to create contiguous blocks of habitat and compatible landscaping.

Soft Engineering

A major challenge of lakeshore landscaping is correcting or avoiding shoreline erosion. Soft engineering mixes engineering techniques with ecological principles to overcome these challenges. It relies heavily on deep-rooted native plants in conjunction with a myriad of inert materials to stabilize shorelines. Where traditional “hard” engineering was designed for erosion control and water confinement, soft engineering incorporates the goals of fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, and aesthetics.

Benefits of Soft Engineering Techniques:

- Less expensive
- More resilient, self repairing
- Longer lasting
- Fish, wildlife, and water quality benefits

Examples of Soft Engineering Tools:

- Restore deep-rooted native grasses and wildflowers
- Coconut-fiber “biologs” absorb waves, build shoreline, and create a smoother shore. These become incorporated into the shore over time.
- Erosion control fabrics help stabilize the shoreline until the vegetation is established.

Native Plants

Will your lakeshore gardens be sensational or stunted? A big part of the answer is plant choice. Most plants at traditional nurseries are adapted for upland areas, not areas where they will have “wet feet.” Additionally, some non-native garden plants are invasive and harmful to native plant communities. Look at nurseries that carry native plants and you’ll find an abundance of unique flowers and fountain-like grasses that will thrive at the water’s edge.

Benefits of Native Plants:

- Adapted to lakeshore stresses, such as periodic flooding or drought.
- Deep root systems prevent erosion, and encourage infiltration and treatment of water before it runs into the lake.
- Beneficial to wildlife such as butterflies and birds.
- Can look formalized or more natural depending on your preferences with plant spacing, grouping, mulching, and borders.

We plant gardens around our homes and elsewhere in our yards, so why not near the lakeshore, especially if you have lawn to the edge? In part, it is because non-native plants available at traditional nurseries don’t thrive in the wet lakeshore environment. Use native plants to create lakeshore gardens that can range from formal to naturalized, and can provide substantial benefits to wildlife and the lake.