



**LAKEHEAD REGION**  
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

## HOW TO NATURALIZE YOUR SHORELINE

March 2021



Lakeshore vegetation is vital to maintaining the overall health of lakes and the entire Lakehead Watershed. The best approach to waterfront management is “natural is best”! If you are just getting started, consider keeping an un-mown strip of natural vegetation 10 metres deep along your shoreline (ideally, clear no more than 25% of your shoreline/frontage). Add in a mowed strip or pedestrian path leading to your dock or beach to compromise your love of the lake’s recreational attractions with its responsibilities as a wildlife corridor. Over time, consider planting native shrubs and gradually moving the mown edge away from the water to transition towards a healthy waterfront.

### **CAN YOU CHECK ANY OF THESE BOXES? IT'S TIME TO NATURALIZE YOUR SHORELINE:**

- An area has been cleared of vegetation*
- Lawn extends right to the water's edge*
- The natural shoreline has been replaced with a breakwall or hard structure*
- Shoreline erosion or poor water quality is evident*
- Algae blooms and excessive weed growth are prominent*



### **GETTING STARTED:**

Look around your lake, do you live or vacation in an area already surrounded by native vegetation? Is there little development occurring? If so, leaving the shoreline alone to renew itself is a good option. Natural regeneration is also a good option on shorelines with exposed bedrock and very shallow topsoil. However, in a disturbed or developing area the “hands off” approach is not recommended, and increases the chance of invasive species moving in. Read on for more information.

## SLOW AND STEADY APPROACH:

Start slowly by removing small pieces of sod and replacing it with young dogwoods, willows, or meadowsweet. Interspersing these shrubs with a few native trees will add extra stability to your shoreline. For more ideas, check out the commonly used shoreline plants native to Northwestern Ontario listed below. Narrow down your borders for the area you wish to naturalize and aim for one shrub every square metre of shoreline. Early spring or late fall are the best times to plant, ensure your new plants are watered well after transplant, and get a good drink every week or two for the first season.

## PROJECT TIME APPROACH:

If you are interested in undertaking a stewardship project and have the time and money to spend gardening, consider creating a landscaping plan that incorporates viewing points, benches, paths, and flowers. You can even incorporate a carefully-placed fire pit to combine human and natural features in the most harmonized way. Give us a call at (807) 344-5857 for professional consultation.

### General Tips -

- *Wherever possible, use locally-grown native plants listed in LRCA's Northwestern Ontario Native Plants List. Avoid digging up wild plants as it can damage natural areas and they may not survive transplant.*
- *If your shoreline needs extra erosion protection, boulders and loose rocks interspersed with shrubs and laid along a gradual slope can absorb and dissipate wave energy. Avoid solid walls as they limit wildlife habitat and degrade the shoreline.*
- *In areas where beavers are active, wrap young tree trunks loosely with chicken wire or hardware cloth.*
- *Add mulch such as leaves or wood chips around newly planted shrubs to help retain moisture.*
- *Water your newly established planting project during dry periods for the first year or two.*

## COMMON SHORELINE PLANTS OF NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO:

The following plants are all native to Northwestern Ontario and suited to shoreline rehabilitation.

### **Dry, Upland Areas - (rocky, exposed sites)**

#### **Trees**

Balsam Fir .....	<i>Abies balsamea</i>
Sugar Maple .....	<i>Acer saccharum</i>
White Birch.....	<i>Betula papyrifera</i>
White Spruce.....	<i>Picea glauca</i>
Red Pine .....	<i>Pinus resinosa</i>
White Pine .....	<i>Pinus strobus</i>
White Cedar .....	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>

#### **Shrubs**

Serviceberry .....	<i>Amelanchier sp.</i>
Red Osier Dogwood .....	<i>Cornus serica</i>
Common Juniper.....	<i>Juniperus communis</i>
Creeping Juniper .....	<i>Juniperus horizontalis</i>
Ninebark.....	<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i>
Chokecherry.....	<i>Prunus virginiana</i>
Red-Berried Elder .....	<i>Sambucus racemosa</i>

## Grasses and Wildflowers

Canada Anemone.....	<i>Anemone canadensis</i>
New England Aster .....	<i>Aster nova-angliae</i>
Fireweed .....	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>
Foxtail Barley.....	<i>Hordenum jubatum</i>
Path Rush.....	<i>Juncus tenuis</i>
Black-Eyed Susan.....	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>

## Wet, Lowland Areas - (wet or flooded part of the season)

### Trees

Red Maple .....	<i>Acer rubrum</i>
Silver Maple .....	<i>Acer saccharinum</i>
White Birch.....	<i>Betula papyrifera</i>
Black Ash .....	<i>Fraxinus nigra</i>
Tamarack .....	<i>Larix laricina</i>
Black Spruce.....	<i>Picea mariana</i>
White Cedar .....	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>

### Shrubs

Speckled Alder .....	<i>Alnus incarna</i>
Red Osier Dogwood .....	<i>Cornus serica</i>
Sweet Gale .....	<i>Myrica Gale</i>
Ninebark .....	<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i>
Bebb Willow.....	<i>Salix bebbiana</i>
Pussy Willow.....	<i>Salix discolor</i>
Heart-leaved Willow .....	<i>Salix eriocephala</i>
Meadow Willow.....	<i>Salix petiolaris</i>
Common Elderberry.....	<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>
White Meadowsweet .....	<i>Spiraea alba</i>
Highbush Cranberry.....	<i>Viburnum trilobum</i>

## Grasses and Wildflowers

Canada Anemone.....	<i>Anemone canadensis</i>
Swamp Milkweed .....	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>
Canadian Bluejoint .....	<i>Calamagrostis canadensis</i>
Bebb's Sedge .....	<i>Carex bebbii</i>
White Turtlehead .....	<i>Chelone glabra</i>
Common Boneset .....	<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>
Joe-Pye Weed .....	<i>Eupatorium rugosum</i>
Blue Flag Iris .....	<i>Iris versicolor</i>
Big Bur-Reed.....	<i>Sparganium eurycarpum</i>
Blue Vervain.....	<i>Verbena hastata</i>