



How Do I Start Naturalizing My Shoreline?

LAKE HOME & CABIN KIT • SECOND EDITION

Maintaining a Healthy Shoreline

A natural shoreline is a healthy shoreline, benefiting the water quality of lakes and streams, the surrounding wildlife, and the people who live on or near your lakeshore property. If your property hasn't been developed yet, you can plan ahead to leave it in its natural state. Minimize the area you clear for a dock or beach. This way you preserve as much vegetation near the shore as possible. Then practice "shoreland editing"—selectively remove some branches, shrubs, and trees to create lake views while retaining as much vegetation as you can to screen undesirable views and provide privacy.

How to Restore Your Shoreline

If you have developed property with little or no natural shoreline, follow these steps:

1. Make a sketch of your property, including buildings, decks or patios, lawn, trees, paths, dock, and swim area. Think of how you use the land now and how you'd like to use it in the future. Would it make sense to relocate your dock or reduce the size of your beach? Draw in the area you'd like to naturalize; aim to naturalize at least one-half of your shoreline frontage.
2. Identify the three shoreland zones within your proposed naturalization area: the aquatic, which is all under water; the wet meadow, which may be seasonally flooded or near the water table; and the upland zone, which is rarely flooded.
3. Prepare the site. If you have invasive plants, such as purple loosestrife or reed canarygrass, you may need the advice of a natural resource professional to help you get rid of them. You may also need to move a dock, realign a path, or grade slopes. If you expose or move soil near your shoreline, be sure to secure required permits and take action to prevent erosion and transport of soil to the water.
4. Finally, get native plants established. There are two ways of doing this.
 - *Do nothing!* If you stop mowing, weeding, or raking your shoreland area, many native plants will likely reestablish. If your property has mucky or silty soil along the shoreline, seeds from plants that lived there in the past may still exist in the bottom sediments. Plants such as spike rush, sedges, and arrowhead have grown on some shorelines that were not planted, simply because people stopped cutting and raking.
 - *Plant your shoreline.* To speed the process or feature particular plants, plant seedlings. Select appropriate plants, native to your area, for each of your shoreland zones. See the websites below for information on plant varieties and their requirements to thrive, and other details on establishing native plants.

Source: University of Minnesota Extension Service Faculty.

Want to know more?

INFORMATION ON THE WEB

www.extension.umn.edu/shoreland

www.shorelandmanagement.org

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