

Common Problems with Shoreline Landscapes

The most common shoreline landscape is a wide lawn with exotic ornamental plants leading to a bulkhead. Here are some problems and potential solutions to this type of landscape:

Bulkheads

Problem: A bulkhead is not the best or only way to prevent erosion. Bulkheads create unnatural drop-offs that can be dangerous, especially to children and the elderly. They also interrupt natural shoreline vegetation and nutrient flow.

Solution: Planting and maintaining natural vegetation instead of constructing a bulkhead will control soil erosion and run-off, provide a more gradual transition from yard to lake, help beautify your lake and enhance wildlife habitat.

Excess Nutrients

Problem: Wide-spread use of lawn and garden fertilizers on shoreline properties can cause nutrients to build up in the water. Rain and watering can wash fertilizers out of your yard and garden and into the lake. Fertilizer buildup in the water results in rapid aquatic plant growth and algal blooms, which hamper swimming and boating activities and kill fish. Careless discarding of lawn clippings and yard debris near the lake will also cause excess nutrients to pollute the water.

Solution: Leave some native vegetation along your shoreline. If native vegetation is gone, reduce the size of your lawn by replanting native species of trees, shrubs and ground cover. Native plants require fewer pesticides and fertilizers and, once established, need less water than exotic, ornamental varieties. Create buffer areas with native plants to act as a natural filter system, trapping nutrients from stormwater run-off before they enter the lake. Dispose of lawn clippings and yard debris or start compost piles well away from the lake or nearby streams and wetlands.

Excess Toxins

Problem: Pesticides and herbicides commonly used around homes and gardens can cause serious damage to fish, wildlife and people when they get in the lake water. They may be blown directly into the lake when applied on a windy day or washed off plants and soil by rain or watering. Improper storage and disposal of these chemicals also can pollute the lake.

Solution: Always read the labels carefully and avoid using pesticides and herbicides whenever possible, especially on windy days. Use pesticides only when you actually see a pest.

Dispose of excess pesticides at an approved location. Two approved locations include Hidden Valley Transfer Station Hazardous Waste Facility (253) 847-7555 and Tacoma Hazardous Waste Facility (253) 591-5543.

Canada Geese

Problem: Lake-side lawns encourage nuisance populations of Canada geese, who like to feed in short grassy areas. Bird feces on docks and lawns can contribute harmful nutrients to the lake water, in addition to being unsightly, unsanitary and unsafe.

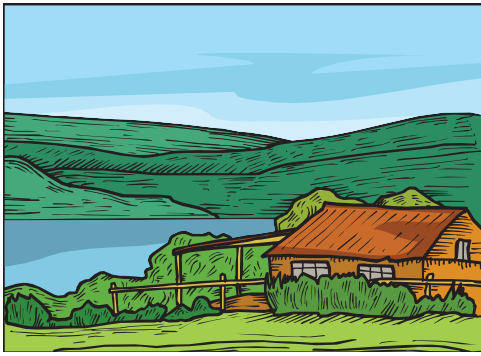
Solution: Replace the portion of the lawn next to the lake with a six to eight foot wide buffer zone of low growing plants. Consider placing a path through the buffer zone for access to a dock or gravel beach. Many plants are suitable for this area of wet soil, including sala, ajuga, mountain cranberry, bearberry cotoneaster, and creeping bramble. For the gardening enthusiast, the buffer zone is an ideal area for a perennial flower or herb garden or a bed of wildflowers.

This information
is provided in cooperation with
Washington State Lake Protection Association
(WALPA)

Blueprint For A Lake Friendly Landscape



BONNEY
Lake



Lake Friendly Landscaping

Shoreline landscaping can have a major impact on swimming, boating and fishing in your lake. Why? Because toxins from run-off, pesticides, and fertilizers can lower water quality, trigger algal blooms, kill fish, and cause excess weed growth. "Lake friendly" landscaping reduces the need for pesticides and fertilizers, helps filter harmful contaminants out of run-off before they pollute your lake, and helps control erosion.

Lake-Friendly Landscape Plan

Shown to the right is a sample landscape plan that protects water quality and encourages native plants, fish and wildlife close to shore. Remember that encouraging shoreline habitat doesn't mean building a barrier of native vegetation between your home and the lake. A balanced approach to waterfront landscaping retains natural habitat and reduces pollution and erosion, while also meeting your aesthetic and access needs.

In the example on this brochure, two neighbors have worked together to create native plant zones. The following are descriptions and some recommended plants for each zone.

Riparian Zone

This zone extends about two feet up the bank from the edge of the lake. Fluctuating water levels and the wave action from boats and wind impact this zone. Plants located here must tolerate wet soils for long periods and have deep root systems to minimize erosion. To ensure an unobstructed view, low growing plants are best in this zone. Examples of plant varieties suitable for this zone are: lady fern, sedges (many species), and blue flag iris.

Lower Bank

This two to ten foot wide zone is adjacent to the riparian zone. The soil here tends to be moist but not wet. Your plan for this zone should include at least three shrubs (such as red osier dogwood, red elderberry, and evergreen huckleberry), and two ground cover varieties (such as lady fern, bunchberry, and sword fern).

Upper Bank

This zone extends from the end of the lower bank zone toward your home. The landscape here should include at least three shrubs (such as serviceberry, mock orange and red flowering currant), and two ground cover plants (such as salal and sword fern).

Mixed throughout the upper and lower bank zones should be at least two varieties of shade trees and two types of shade and cover plants to create a multi-layered canopy. Some good choices for shade trees are: chokecherry, Oregon ash, and western hemlock; for shade and cover: vine maple, western crabapple and hazelnut. In all zones, avoid invasive species such as purple loosestrife, yellow flag iris, Japanese knotweed, English ivy and reed canary grass. To learn more about lake friendly landscaping call (253) 835-2752.

