

## Lake-Friendly Landscapes on a Budget

The Balsam Lake Waterfront Runoff Program encourages native plantings and runoff reduction landscaping projects to protect lake water quality. However, in times of shrinking family budgets and real estate values, adding a landscaping project at your waterfront property may be the last thing you are considering. You can help protect water quality without reaching deeply into your pocket. There are many low and no cost options for reducing runoff and improving habitat next to the water. Your biggest investment is likely to be in changing your mindset rather than your bank balance.



### The Basics

To reduce runoff from waterfront property, consider how water flows and where nutrients, sediment, and water flow originate. More vegetation reduces erosion and slows water flow – reducing pollutants carried to the lake.

**Eliminate Nutrients** – The nutrient of greatest concern in most lakes is phosphorus because it is the limiting ingredient for algae growth. The most obvious source of phosphorus is fertilizer. According to Wisconsin regulations, fertilizer with phosphorus may not be used on lawns. However, it is still a good idea to check the label. Fertilizer labels have an N-P-K value listed, and phosphorus is the second number. So, a label with 6-0-6 has 0 phosphorus. Even simpler, don't fertilize your lawn at the lake. If grass growth is poor, test your soil. If the pH is low, add lime as a soil amendment.

### Divert Water

Channelized water causes erosion and carries sediment and nutrients to the lake. Simple diversions can make a big difference. Roof downspouts are frequently the source of water channels. Add flexible plastic downspout diverters to direct water to a flat, well vegetated area, or even better, to ground that slopes away from the lake.

**Slow Runoff Flow** – Slowing runoff flow reduces erosion and sediment carried to the lake. If slopes are gradual, water flow may be slowed enough to allow water to soak into the ground. The simplest way to slow runoff flow is to allow vegetation to grow. Tall stems of grasses and other vegetation provide more resistance to flowing water. A very minor change is to set your mower blade higher, perhaps to 3 or 4 inches. To get greater water quality benefits, choose to not mow certain areas near the lake. Greatest benefits to the lake result if you choose no-mow areas where water flows, on steep slopes, and in areas closest to the water. It really is good for your lake home landscape to be more wild – both for lake water quality and for the animals that

### NO OR LOW COST Lakeshore Water Quality Advice

#### *Lawn Care*

- Don't fertilize or use zero phosphorus fertilizer
- Set your mower blade to 3-4 inches.
- Mow less frequently
- Select no-mow areas

#### *Water flow*

- Add downspout diverters

#### *Native Plants*

- Allow lakefront to grow
- Identify invasive plants
- Purchase bare root shrubs

#### *Go to [BLPRD.com](http://BLPRD.com)*

- Get free info

#### *Request a free site visit*

live nearby. With less time spent on lawn maintenance, perhaps there will finally be some time for fishing or taking that evening stroll.

**Encourage Native Growth** – If you put away your mower and allow plants to grow, you are likely to find that native flowers and grasses will sprout. This will be a great time to learn more about the local flora and see what nature has to offer. Learn about some of the non-native invasive plants, so you are not encouraging their growth. Spotted knapweed, purple loosestrife, and Japanese knotweed are a few to look out for and remove.

Many resources are available on the lake district website blprd.com including lists and photos of both native and invasive plants. Go to *Waterfront Runoff Program* then *Native Plant Lists*. *Top Ten Native Shrubs for Wildlife* includes some great choices of native shrubs for birds. Bare root shrubs are available in the spring and small potted shrubs are available throughout the growing season – both are low cost options. Call the Polk County Land and Water Resources Department at 715-485-8699 to get on their mailing list to order bare root shrubs for next spring.

### **Tell Your Story**

We would love to hear about how you made changes on your property using your ingenuity rather than the cash in your wallet. Send your stories and photos to Cheryl at [harmonyenv@amerytel.net](mailto:harmonyenv@amerytel.net).

### **Free Visits**

Cheryl at Harmony Environmental can also set you up with a free water quality consultation for your property. She will work with you to further investigate low cost options and additional lake-friendly landscaping methods!

**Protect your waterfront investment**

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**FREE Water Quality Consultation**

**Learn about lake-friendly landscaping!**

Call or email Harmony Environmental  
715-268-9992 [harmonyenv@amerytel.net](mailto:harmonyenv@amerytel.net)

Available for Balsam Lake properties only 



**See our website BLPRD.com. Go to the Waterfront Runoff Program pages. To schedule a visit with our lake-friendly landscape specialist call or email Cheryl at 715-268-9992 or [harmonyenv@Amerytel.net](mailto:harmonyenv@Amerytel.net).**