



TOPIC OF THE MONTH APRIL 2019

Native Shoreline Plants

By Jake Janski – MN Native Landscapes

As we look ahead to warmer days, many of us long to get our hands back into the dirt and start planting. For some, it's the excitement of adding new plants to existing landscapes. For others, there is the anticipated transplanting or splitting of existing plants to expand one's own garden, or to spread the wealth to friends and neighbors. But no matter what type of plantings you're looking forward to, the time to start will soon be here.

If you're one that's looking to expand your planting pallet; add plants to a tough spot; or improve your environment; native plants are a fantastic option. There are native plants in Minnesota adapted to all manner of conditions and environments, which are readily available and easy to plant. They take a bit of care to become established, but thereafter they thrive and spread as nature intended. Eventually, they can even be transplanted, split and shared like most garden perennials.



Photo courtesy of Minnesota Native Landscapes



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The shoreline environment: We in Minnesota are fortunate to have an abundance of lakes, each of which has its own personality, which has evolved with communities of plants and animals. A vast number of native plant species have adapted to this wide array of lake types. The plants that dominate shoreline areas are the most adaptable, as they must withstand the rising waters levels of the spring, the lower levels in the heat of the summer and the bounce of the lakes as they respond to rain events and other impacts. The plants that can thrive in such conditions are essential to the overall health of the lake ecosystems.

Shoreline plants: The plants that can thrive on MN's shorelines come in all forms- wildflowers, sedges, rushes, grasses, ferns, vines, shrubs and trees. While there are many species that will not thrive, or even survive, on a shoreline, there is a great selection of native plants available that will.



Photo courtesy of Minnesota Native Landscapes

In order to establish native plants in a shoreline environment, it is essential that proper species are selected to “put the right plant in the right spot”. Doing so may require some expert advice from native plant growers, master gardeners or local water management groups. They can help you select the plants to provide you the “services” you require, along with the aesthetics you desire.



Photo courtesy of Minnesota Native Landscapes

Shoreline plant “services”: It will typically take multiple growing seasons to establish a healthy, thriving population of native plants in most environments. Shoreline plants establish relatively quickly due to the abundance of water, but still may need a couple years before they are fully matured. Once that has been achieved, these plants will armor a shoreline against all the adversity nature will throw at it. They can hold soils together during times of ice push or summer wave action.

They can provide habitat for vulnerable wildlife such as pollinators, songbirds, amphibians, water fowl and fish. And these plants can most certainly increase the aesthetic appeal of a shoreline property by providing lush, blooming plants that can thrive in perpetuity.

Learn more and add plants to your shoreline: If you are interested in adding native plants to your shoreline, or any part of your landscape, contact your local native plant growers or SWCDs to find out how. Or join us on August 17th for the **Healthy Land, Healthy Lake Event** at McQuoid's Inn, for native shoreline plant demonstrations and an onsite native shoreline plant sale!

For more information:
Visit www.millelacswatershed.org or

Find us on 

Additional Resources:

USDA Plants Database, visit: plants.sc.egov.usda.gov

Minnesota Wildflowers, visit: www.minnesotawildflowers.info