

# Lake Leader

PROMOTING STEWARDSHIP OF POLK COUNTY'S NATURAL RESOURCES

MAPLE LAKE EDITION



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## Introduction

Improving the recreational suitability and lake life for everyone starts right at your shoreline. Shorelines provide pollutants a direct path to easily enter the lake. ‘Lakescaping’, or shoreline restoration, can create a natural buffer that is both beautiful as well as beneficial to slowing and eliminating the amount of runoff entering the lake. The East Polk SWCD works with Prairie Restorations Inc. for shoreline restorations and cost-share may be available for qualified projects.

Other ways to prevent runoff from entering the lake are rain barrels or rain gardens. Rain barrels can be used to collect the rainwater from gutters which can then be used to water your plants or garden. Rain gardens are placed in naturally low areas of the yard and are used to catch and store the water thus eliminating runoff to the lake. The East Polk SWCD has rain barrel workshops in the spring to help you create your own rain barrel and can also assist in rain garden plans.

More about shoreline restorations, rain barrels, rain gardens, and their benefits on pages two and three!

<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/living-green/keep-your-shoreline-natural>



# Lakescaping 101

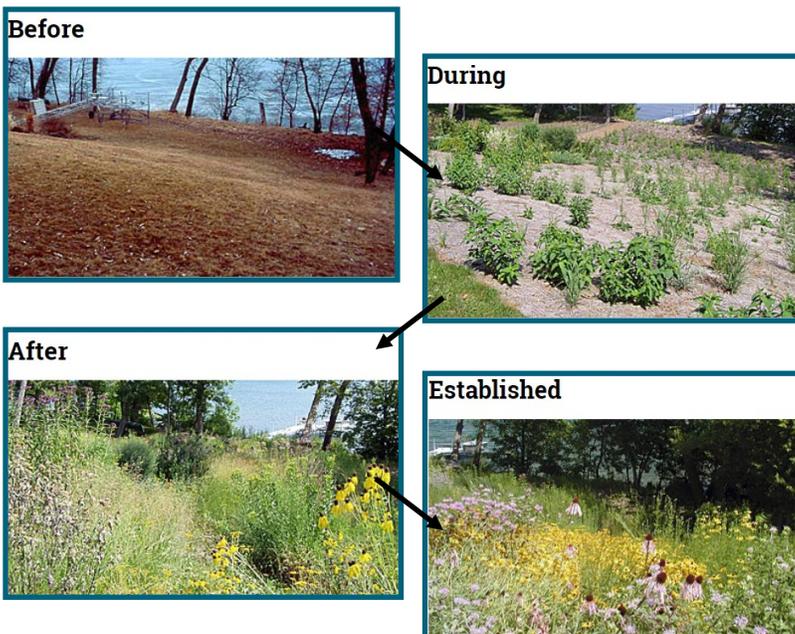
The following information is from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resource Website regarding “Shoreline Alterations: Natural Buffers and Lakescaping”.

Creation of a buffer zone is the essence of the lakescaping concept. A buffer zone is an unmowed strip of native vegetation that extends both lakeward and landward from the water’s edge. A buffer zone that extends 25-50 feet from shore is preferable, but even 10-15 feet provides benefits. Installing a buffer zone can restore many functions critical to the health of the lake that may have been eliminated previously by sod, hard structures, or mowing. Planting grasses and flowering plants that are native to your area will diversify and enhance your shoreline and provide a seasonal show of color

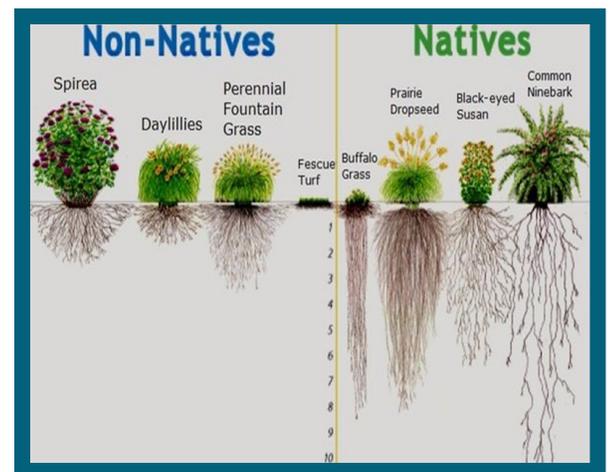
Creating and maintaining natural buffer zones along the shore does not mean your property has to look unkempt. Buffers and upland islands of trees, shrubs, and flowers can bring natural beauty to your yard. Additionally, tall native plants typically have deep root systems. They will slow erosion, decrease ice damage, increase rain infiltration, and act as a barrier to discourage geese from walking on your shoreline property. Your shoreline is part of a larger community and ecosystem. Individual choices by many have cumulative impacts on a lake and its ecosystem. Your actions can restore or degrade the quality of the ecosystem. Restoring your lakeshore to a more natural condition is important, even if your neighbors are not restoring theirs, because it can help wildlife habitat, water quality, and fish.

Maintaining a healthy lake is far less costly than trying to fix a degraded one. If you are fortunate enough to have a natural shoreline, maintain or enhance it as a buffer zone and minimize erosion on the areas used for access or recreation. If your property lacks natural areas, plant native vegetation or let areas grow naturally. You will be surprised at the aesthetic appeal, as well as the energy and time you save, of helping your lake help itself.

[https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/waters/shoreline\\_alterations\\_lakescaping.pdf](https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/waters/shoreline_alterations_lakescaping.pdf)



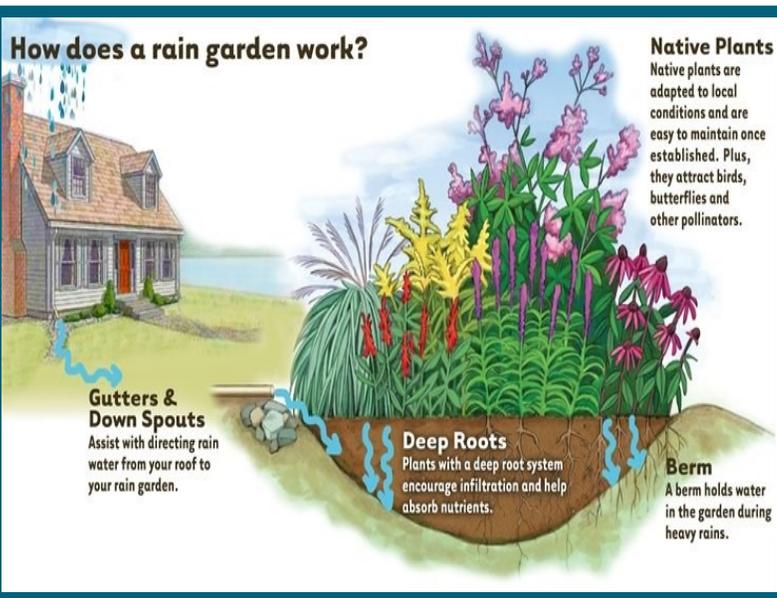
## Ask about Cost Share Opportunities from East Polk SWCD



# Rain Gardens

Rain gardens are a wonderful way to improve water quality in your area while enjoying the beauty and other benefits of native plants. A rain garden is different from a regular garden in a few ways; its set in a shallow depression (6-12in) often with a sand/compost mix at the bottom, water is directed toward it and it features native plants.

The benefits include adding beauty to your yard, absorbing runoff which can reduce erosion and filter pollutants out of the water, provide habitat and food for pollinators and has potential reduce wet spots in your yard and therefore mosquito populations.



## Native Plants

In nature, plants commonly grow in association with a particular group of other compatible plants. These communities are found where specific environmental conditions exist (e.g. soils, topography, climate, water).

Vegetation removal, soil disturbance, and soil compaction from installing turf grass, mowing, landscaping, etc. decreases the amount of runoff absorbed which increases the pollutants that reach the lake.

Turf grasses have very short root structures which lessens the amount of moisture that can be absorbed. Runoff that does not get absorbed picks up pollutants and excess nutrients carrying them directly into the lake. When turf grasses are replaced by native plants, that have much larger root structures, this allows more moisture to be absorbed into the ground reducing runoff and the pollutants it can carry.

## FAQ's about Rain Gardens

Is a rain garden a pond?

- Rain gardens are designed to hold water for no more than 24-48 hours. Unlike ponds, you don't need costly pumps, electricity, or filters. In fact, a rain garden is a filter for the water that runs off of your property's impervious surfaces.

How much maintenance is required?

- Less than a regular garden, if you use native plants. They adapt well to their natural surroundings, and don't need fertilizers or pesticides. While your natives are establishing their roots, water them every other day or so for two to three weeks, or until you see that they're thriving. After that, you'll never need to water them except during a prolonged dry spell.

Won't it attract mosquitoes?

- Properly installed, your rain garden shouldn't hold water long enough for mosquito larvae to complete their 7-to-12-day life cycle. Rain gardens also attract dragonflies, who find mosquitoes quite tasty.

Do I have to use native plants?

- Natives have adapted to our climate and are much better at handling the periodic inundation (getting their feet wet) that goes along with a rain garden. They'll also save you the time and money of replanting every year, and offer much greater wildlife value.

Can it be too large or too small?

- With the help of a landscaper or other professional, you can size your garden to handle all the rain that normally falls here. You don't have to plan gardens to capture all of the rain water from your house. For example, capturing water from a single downspout will help.

<http://raingardenalliance.org/what/faqs>



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## Rain Barrels

### Benefits of Rain Barrels

- ◆ Rainwater is better for your plants and soils.
- ◆ Your own water source in times of drought or watering restrictions.
- ◆ Reduce runoff by collecting rain.
- ◆ Prevent erosion by collecting the rain.
- ◆ Cuts down the amount of water going into the sewer.
- ◆ Green way to wash cars and pets.
- ◆ Eco-friendly way to keep compost moist.
- ◆ Control moisture levels around the foundation of your home.
- ◆ Reduces your water bill.
- ◆ Be an example for Environmental Stewardship.

