Conservation Corner

*Conservation Corner is a weekly article produced by the Forest County Land &Water Conservation Department. For more information contact Steve Kircher, County Conservationist-Land Information/GIS Director at 715-478-1387 or by e-mail at* *lcc@co.forest.wi.us**.*

As Summer begins, we enter into ‘Construction Season’ in the Land & Water Conservation Department. We are planning/overseeing many Shoreland Restoration Projects and I wanted to address a question we often receive. Landowners often ask, “Restoration projects cost thousands of dollars, even with Cost Share so. what can I do, myself, to protect my shoreline or water quality for not a lot of money?

 There are lots of different things a homeowner can do with just a small investment.

* Diversify your shoreline.
* Don't mow your grass all the way to the water's edge.
* Put a few native plants and shrubs close to your shoreline to help protect the shore from erosion.  Many native plants and shrubs have long root systems to hold soil in place much better than lawn grass.
* Encourage infiltration.   You can encourage infiltration around your yard by minimizing hard, impervious walkways. Instead of a cement sidewalk, use gravel or paving stones which will allow water to soak into the soil.​
* Don't over-use lawn products.   Products such as fertilizer, herbicides, or pesticides can be a serious problem for your lake.  Remember:  if you put it on your lawn, it WILL end up in your lake.
* Utilize fish sticks!   Fish sticks are feeding, breeding and nesting sites for birds and other mammals.
* Be careful what you flush.   If you live near a lake, chances are you are not on a city sewer/water system.  Flushing items such as water-soluble medicines, soaps and wash water with harsh, chemical, cleaning solutions do not go to a treatment plant and are not filtered out. Again, if it's water-soluble when it is flushed, it WILL end up in your lake eventually.​
* Install a rain garden.   A rain garden is an inexpensive, bowl-shaped garden that, through the actions of spongy living soils and properly chosen plants, slows, filters, and absorbs runoff from roofs or pavement keeping it from becoming harmful storm water pollution. Rain gardens are a smart and proven way of using beautiful landscaping to: clean our lakes and waterways, and protect our precious natural habitats.
* Don't rake your leaves in the fall.   Wait until late spring before doing any raking.  Leaves are wonderful places for butterfly eggs to overwinter. One of the most valuable things you can do to support pollinators and other invertebrates is to provide them with the winter cover they need in the the form of fall leaves and standing dead plant material.

*For more information or assistance with your property contact Steve Kircher, County Conservationist-Land Information/GIS Director at 715-478-1387 or by e-mail at* *lcc@co.forest.wi.us**.*