

Vegetative Buffers

January 30, 2017

Rain water and snowmelt run-off are two major enemies of a healthy lake. Run-off from sidewalks, driveways, lawns, roads, and leaky septic systems contains pollutants like salts, pesticides, fertilizers, oils, and detergents. These pollutants contaminate the lake and fuel the growth of algae.

The main remedy to prevent run-off contamination is to plant and maintain enough vegetation on your property to absorb run-off before it reaches the lake. This *vegetative buffer* includes a variety of deep-rooted large and small trees, woody shrubs, bushes, flowers, aquatic plants and ground cover planted *throughout your property* as well as *along a 5' wide barrier at the shoreline*.

Vegetarian barriers serve several functions. They-

- Absorb contaminant-laden water before it reaches the lake
- Prevent soil erosion, grass clippings and leaves from ending up in the lake
- Provide habitat for shore-line wildlife
- Block access to your property for geese - and
- Improve the visual appeal of your property

Best Practices for Creating a Vegetarian Barrier

- Plant enough vegetation so that your *entire property* is an effective barrier against run-off between the road and the lake.
- Maintain a 5-foot-deep tree, shrub, and flower buffer along your water's edge. You may leave room for boat launch and storage. Green grass absorbs few nutrients. An expansive lawn bordering the lake is a sign of bad lake stewardship.
- Maintain a variety of large woody plants and shrubs around your entire property. The larger the tree, the deeper its roots and the more it absorbs. Trees also prevent soil run-off; so, think before you decide to cut down any trees. Plant new trees to replace any you must cut down.
- Encourage growth of cattails, irises, and other plants to grow directly *in the water*. They act as fish nurseries and filter and purify lake water.
- Eliminate "gullies" on your property. They funnel run-off water rapidly into the lake.
- Choose permeable material (not blacktop and concrete) for driveways, walkways, and patios so that rain and snowmelt can percolate into the soil instead of flowing into the lake.

Vegetation barriers do not have to cost a lot and do not require professional landscaping. But they do help maintain a healthy lake, and are required in Taconic Shores.