

## **Tips on Replanting a Lake Shoreline**

*(Adapted from Out of the Blue – the VTDEC Water Quality Division's Newsletter)*

The importance of natural shoreline vegetation along lakeshores cannot be over-stated. Leafy cover provides shoreline stability and wildlife habitat, and offers scenic and privacy benefits. It also is a source of woody and leaf debris that benefits lake ecology.

Property owners of any size lot, small and large, can increase the amount of vegetation to add some of the above benefits. Below are some practical suggestions for improving the lakeshore area.

- Narrow your access to the lake or dock, and plant shrubs and trees along the remaining bank. This type of woody strip on the bank can prevent erosion and avoid the need for a retaining wall.
- If an existing retaining wall is failing, consider replacing it with a vegetated bank instead. A drawing of a simple design from the publication "Replacing Old Walls with New Banks" is available from the VT Water Quality Division's Lakes and Ponds section (802-241-3777).
- Identify areas of lawn along the shore for planting patches of trees and shrubs. Do not mow under the plantings, rather let them develop a duff (decomposing vegetation) and groundcover layer. The wider the band of natural vegetation along the shore, the more runoff filtering benefit.
- Prune trees and shrubs to make openings through which to see the lake.
- Plant native species already found in your region of Vermont.
- Plant "replacement" trees and shrubs before the current ones get old and start falling down.
- If trees, branches or leaves fall in the lake, leave them there if possible. (They provide important habitat for fish and smaller lake life.) If you can, identify part of the in-lake area, off your property and adjacent to the area you use for swimming and boating access, that can "go wild".

### **Four Options for Obtaining Native Plants:**

1. The easy way – stop mowing and see what grows in. Then prune out species you do not want and encourage those that you do want.
2. Transplant from farther uphill on your property. This approach ensures you use plants that are hardy to the area. Transplant in the spring before budding begins, or late fall after leaf fall. Smaller plants are more likely to survive than large ones.
3. Contact your Natural Resources Conservation District for springtime plant sale information and vegetation management tips. Many Districts offer native trees and shrubs at very low prices during a springtime plant sale. The plants are usually "bare root" which means they must be planted immediately and watered for several weeks. Visit the website [www.vacd.org](http://www.vacd.org) for locations of District offices.
4. Purchase plants from a local nursery. Potted plants, while more expensive, start out larger and have a higher survival rate. "Sources of Native Plant Material in Vermont", a list of nurseries that carry native stock is available at [www.vtwaterquality.org](http://www.vtwaterquality.org) under the Wetlands Section or by calling 802-241-3770. This publication also includes a listing of appropriate native plants.