

# The Shoreland Stewardship Series

Number 1

## *Which Tradition?*

Owners of shoreland property often bring with them traditional landscaping ideas centered on the conventional residential yard. Sometimes that means a manicured lawn extending to the water's edge. Unfortunately, that carpet of green can cause serious problems for the adjacent lake.

A natural shoreline is a bridge between two worlds. Studies show that there can be as much as 500% more diversity of plant and animal species along a natural shoreline compared to upland areas. When we change a natural shoreline to a lawn, we damage more than that rich mosaic of life. We could also be contributing to water pollution. Building a home and establishing a lawn can cause seven times the amount of phosphorus and 18 times the amount of sediment to enter the water compared to a natural shoreline.

But lakeshore property owners can help prevent these negative effects by rethinking the idea of tradition. Instead of transplanting urban traditions to the natural lakeshore getaway, why not retain the traditional Wisconsin lakeshore? Leave a buffer of natural vegetation along the shore!



Compared to a conventional residential yard, a naturally landscaped yard can be better for the waterway and less work to maintain.

## *A Fresh Look at Shoreland Restoration*

**S**horeland landscaping, as its name implies, is the practice of restoring the healthy transition between land and water. Typically, a plan will include a shoreland buffer zone—an area of native vegetation along the water's edge. It can extend both onto the land and into the water. The goal of creating or restoring native vegetation in a buffer zone is to bring back the ecological habitats that are reduced or lost by traditional lawns.

Shoreland restoration differs somewhat from the traditional gardening approach. Rather than modifying the site with fertilizers and continuous, long-term cultivation, as is often necessary when you plant a garden, this approach attempts to re-establish native vegetation that once grew with the existing soil, moisture and sunlight conditions. Once established, native plants are superior to non-native plants for the specific site conditions found along your shoreline.

Vegetative buffers can return or maintain many desirable features to your shoreline. At a minimum, shoreland buffers present a seasonal array of colors, textures, aromas, and wildlife activity. They can maintain or restore the natural qualities that keep us so strongly attracted to our living shores.