

Our Shoreline Buffer

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As an owner of Shady Hollow Resort, on Hardy Lake (Cass County), I am constantly looking for ways to improve our landscape and make life easier. Planting a shoreline buffer seemed like it would contribute to the continued health of our precious lake. We started our lakeshore restoration project in 2003. With grant money, we picked out plants that are native to our area of Minnesota from a list provided by the Department of Natural Resources. This took some time, but it was fun and educational. We were especially excited to see how our restoration project would turn out. Thankfully, the University of Minnesota Extension, Shoreland Education Program, selected our project as a demonstration site so volunteers helped us do the planting. Planting day was the weekend before a busy 4th of July.

After our initial planting, we encountered some struggles because rain was very scarce during the rest of the summer. We watered the new plants for the first couple of weeks, but we didn't water after that unless we transplanted plants and no rain fell. The resulting shoreland garden is low maintenance and beautiful in all four seasons. We maintain a portion of the garden with paths and clumps of like plants with markers so our resort guests can wander through, enjoy and learn. Other areas are more "wildly natural" with a mixture of different plants. One area helps to protect a cabin, by preventing erosion that would ruin its foundation. We installed two rain gardens to collect water runoff from our paved driveway and boat launch. Controlling runoff is always going to be a challenge because of our terrain. It is fun to watch the first plants pop up in the spring, my favorite is prairie smoke, and the summer is beautiful with butterfly weed, monarda, prairie onion, roses and so many other species; fall asters and dogwoods are stunning and in winter their seeds feed the birds.

Our garden is a wonderful place to sit, watch and hear wildlife. The monarda



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attracts honey bees (honey bee populations in North America are experiencing "colony collapse disorder" so we are glad to be a part of their prolificacy). The kids love to watch turtles lay eggs and the frogs are so loud it feels like we need earplugs. Birds are diverse and plentiful, including hummingbirds and some birds that we have never seen before.



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We have a garden of abundance as the native plants are well established and full. We give plants away to guests who show an interest and we have donated some for a fundraiser for Relay for Life. We also have moved plants to other areas of the resort to create different

gardens. We have been able to experiment with cutting back and moving plants to areas on the edge of their tolerance limits. We have done this with reasonable success; getting something to grow in extreme environments, such as under the pine trees without altering the soil, and on a hill with sand and all-day sun, has been challenging.

Whenever I hear someone say they can't keep the geese off their lakeshore, my thoughts are "shoreline buffer restoration project." If you want to do something else besides mow the lawn all summer, I say, "shoreline buffer restoration project." If you have erosion problems or a steep hill with water running into the lake creating a shoreline that is unusable... "shoreline buffer restoration project."

We would like to make an open invitation: come visit our site. We would love to answer any questions you have and share our excitement for our shoreline buffer restoration project.

Please visit our Web site at www.shadyhollowresort.com or contact us by email: vacation@shadyhollowresort.com. ■