



# BACKYARD CONSERVATION

*It'll grow on you.*

Hoosier Heartland Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc.  
 6041 Lakeside Boulevard  
 Indianapolis, IN 46278  
 (317) 290-3250  
 (317) 290-3150/fax  
 www.hhrccd.org  
 hhrccd@hhrccd.org



## WATER EDGE ENHANCEMENTS

### What are Water Edge Enhancements?

Edge enhancements are plantings and landscape management practices that reduce erosion, improve water quality, and add wildlife habitat around bodies of water, such as storm water retention ponds or lakes.



Photo courtesy of USDA

### Benefits of Edge Enhancements

*Permanent vegetation provides a solution to numerous shoreline problems, including:*

- Prevents erosion, leaving water clearer and shores intact
- Absorbs nutrient runoff, reducing algae growth
- Reduces waterfowl problems by limiting their movement from the water to shore
- Adds aesthetic value with blooming wildflowers and swaying grasses
- Attracts an array of wildlife
- Provides a nursery for young fish
- Reduces mowing and maintenance requirements

### What to Plant

<u>4-18" Below Water</u>	<u>0-4" Below Water</u>	<u>0-4" Above Water</u>	<u>4-18" Above Water</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sweet Flag</li> <li>• Buttonbush</li> <li>• Spotted Joe-Pye Weed</li> <li>• Swamp Rose Mallow</li> <li>• Rice Cut Grass</li> <li>• Broad-Leaf Arrowhead</li> <li>• Great Bulrush</li> <li>• Swamp Loosestrife</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sweet Flag</li> <li>• Swamp Milkweed</li> <li>• Marsh Marigold</li> <li>• Blue Flag Iris</li> <li>• Dark Green Rush</li> <li>• Wild Senna</li> <li>• Cardinal Flower</li> <li>• Water Willow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swamp Milkweed</li> <li>• New England Aster</li> <li>• Common Tussock Sedge</li> <li>• Tall Coreopsis</li> <li>• Virginia Wild Rye</li> <li>• Great Blue Lobelia</li> <li>• Switch Grass</li> <li>• Cup Plant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Bluestem</li> <li>• Wild Columbine</li> <li>• Common Milkweed</li> <li>• Smooth Blue Aster</li> <li>• Partridge Pea</li> <li>• Wild Bergamot</li> <li>• Compass Plant</li> <li>• Switch Grass</li> </ul>

*(This is not a complete list.)*

## Installation

- Before beginning any project, check homeowner association covenants, as well as local and county ordinances. Do not work in a drainage, utility, or other easement without the proper permits.
- Identify your pond or lake's normal water level and use as a reference for planting.
- For best results, plant shoreline vegetation between April 1st and July 1st.

### Emergent Plants (roots are in the water)

- Use plants grown in pots approximately 2.5 inches square and 3.75 inches deep.
- Plants adapted to water depths of 1 foot should be planted approximately 3 feet apart; Plants suited to 2-6 inches of water should be planted 12 inches apart.
- For all species, install by creating a hole with a spade or dibble, placing the plant in the hole, and firmly packing the soil around it.
- Construct a waterfowl exclusion fence between the plantings and the rest of the pond to prevent geese from eating new plants until well established. See photo to the right.

### Plants Above Waterline

- Fourteen (14) days prior to planting, kill existing vegetation with an herbicide approved for use around water (such as Rodeo).
- Once existing vegetation is killed, till the area to a depth of 3 inches as close to the water as possible.
- Mix desired seed with coarse sand (2 parts sand to 1 part seed) and hand broadcast the mixture over tilled soil.
- Lightly firm seedbed with a roller and cover with an erosion control blanket or straw mulch.

## Maintenance Requirements

- The recommended emergent plant species are native aquatic and shoreline species, so they are well adapted to the sites on which they will be planted. As long as water levels are normal, the plants will require minimal maintenance.
- The seeded areas may need to be mowed or trimmed during the first 2-3 years to maintain weeds. Do not cut lower than 4 inches.
- Remove the waterfowl exclusion fence after 1 year.
- Do not remove the erosion control blanket—it will decompose on its own.



## Cattails and Other Unwanted Vegetation

Cattails are not recommended for water edge enhancement. They grow and spread quickly and out-compete other native, beneficial species. Many methods may be used to control cattails or other unwanted vegetation. The method used will depend on the site and potential effects on other aquatic vegetation. Here are a few common strategies for removing unwanted vegetation along a shoreline:

- **Water level modification:** Temporarily flooding or draining a pond or reservoir can kill existing vegetation. The seeds will often remain viable, however, and re-establish the species once the water level returns to normal. Other plants may be able to float up and continue growing above water or withstand a temporary drought. This method may be of limited use depending on the size of the water system.
- **Chemical control:** Herbicides applied to existing vegetation may be successful in killing the plants. Cutting or mowing the area and then applying chemicals may be even more effective. This method should not be used in protected or delicate water systems.
- **Physical Control:** Cutting the unwanted aquatic vegetation and then submerging it may be effective in killing some plants.
- **Shading:** Using shade cloths or tarps over shade-intolerant species may effectively kill the species. This may take a long period of time to be successful.

For a list of other invasive wetland or water loving plants go to the Midwest Invasive Plant Network website at [mipn.org](http://mipn.org).