

WATERSIDE BUFFER GARDENS FOR THE EIGHTMILE RIVER WATERSHED

WHAT IS A WATERSIDE BUFFER?

A waterside buffer is a vegetated area along a stream, pond or lake. It can be sized, designed and planted, as a garden bed, or it can simply be a naturally vegetated area. A waterside buffer does not necessarily block views or prevent access to the waterbody, and can even enhance its enjoyment.

WHY ARE WATERSIDE BUFFERS IMPORTANT?

There are many benefits of waterside buffers. They provide shade, stabilize banks, prevent erosion, slow stormwater runoff, filter pollutants, help avoid flooding, and provide food and shelter for wildlife. Waterside buffers can also be beautiful and inviting places for people to enjoy!

HOW DO I CREATE A WATERSIDE BUFFER?

Creating a waterside buffer garden is no different from creating a garden bed.

- 1 *Size* your garden considering available space. Keep in mind it is best to protect as much of the length of the waterbody as practical. A 35-foot width is recommended, but a narrower buffer is better than none!
- 2 *Design* your garden by starting with a sketch, then choose plants appropriate for your soil and light conditions. Plants native to southern New England are best; they are adapted to our climate and soils, and will attract native wildlife. A variety of trees, shrubs, grasses, ferns and flowering perennials with different heights, bloom times, colors and textures will add interest and enhance benefits. Lower growing plants will preserve views, and paths will allow access.
- 3 *Prepare to plant* your garden by marking out the area to be planted, and clearing weeds, grass and any other unwanted vegetation. Be sure to remove any non-native invasive plants that could overrun your new garden. Amend your soil (have it tested first to determine needs), and you are ready to plant!



The Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Watershed collaborated with the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District to establish a demonstration buffer on Lake Hayward in East Haddam. The buffer is part of a project to promote use of vegetated buffers along streams, lakes and ponds to enhance wildlife habitat and protect water quality throughout the Eightmile River Watershed. Above is the area prior to planting (left), and one of three segments of the buffer several months after planting (right). (photos: Pat Young and Kathy Connolly)

BUFFER RESOURCES

Candlewood Lake Buffer Guidelines, candlewoodlakeauthority.org
CT River Joint Commissions fact sheets, crjc.org/pubs/riparian-buffers/
Connecticut Sea Grant guides, seagrants.uconn.edu/publications/coastalres/
How to Create a Streamside Buffer Garden, conservect.org/ctrivercoastal (Resources)
Where the Land and Water Meet, ct.nrcs.usda.gov (Topics: Water)
Lake Hayward Buffer info., speakingoflandscapes.com/Lake-Hayward-Buffer-Garden

For Information or Technical Assistance Contact:

CT River Coastal Conservation District, conservect.org/ctrivercoastal, 860-346-3282
Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Watershed, eightmileriver.org, 860-345-8700
Speaking of Landscapes, speakingoflandscapes.com, 860-510-2136

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