

Planting on Slopes

(plants all native to Connecticut)

Compiled by North Central Conservation District, Ruth Klue

General Considerations

1. Tops of slopes are generally drier than you might think, since water tends to drain downhill instead of soaking into the soil. Use plants that should be able to survive without irrigation, since soil erodes from slopes saturated with irrigation water. Study different areas of your slope to determine naturally-occurring variance of moisture and light levels.
2. Use a variety of mostly native shrubs, perennials, and grasses for the best slope protection. The varying plants will have root systems of varying depths, stabilizing more area of slope soil. Planting younger vegetation tends to result, in the long run, in more successful root systems.
3. Don't plant big trees with heavy canopies or shallow roots. There is a risk that the trees could topple, or that heavy shade from the trees could kill undergrowth, leaving bare soil susceptible to erosion. If you wish to plant trees on the slope, use smaller trees, sparingly, and keep lower vegetation growing underneath them.
4. While turf grass on slopes helps reduce raindrop-type erosion, its roots are shallow, which can lead to clumps of grass sliding downhill in wet conditions.
5. Mulch in between plants until they grow to fill in the area. Mulch helps hold the soil, and prevents growth of invasive plants.
6. Many of the recommended plants spread by rhizomes and runners, and can often colonize and stabilize a slope quite successfully. If you wish to prevent colonizing beyond the slope, contain with an edging. Make sure not to use non-native plants known to be invasive. For a list of plants invasive to our area, visit this website: <http://invasives.uconn.edu/ipane/>
7. If your slope is extremely erodible, call your local conservation district for consultation.

Suggested Plants

Trees (see above #3)

Amelanchier species (Shadbush/Serviceberry)
Cercis canadensis (Redbud)
Cornus florida or alternifolia (Dogwood species)

Shrubs

Aronia species (Red or Black Chokeberry) 6' to 10' x 3' to 5, suckering, colonizing shrub with numerous, slender stems, brilliant red fall color, persistent red fall fruit eaten by birds. Fall color best in sun, but tolerates part shade, dry or wet sites, easily established, colonizes. Good in massing, useful for stabilizing banks.

Clethra alnifolia 5-8' upright, slowly spreading. Fluffy, bottle brush-like, extremely fragrant white flowers late summer. Glossy green leaves turn luminescent yellow in autumn. Moist to wet soil, sun to shade. Spreads slowly by rhizomes. Flowers attract butterflies and bees.

Cornus amomum (Silky Dogwood) 6 to 8 ' vigorous shrub, creamy white spring flowers, lovely blue fruits beloved by wildlife, sun to part shade, moist to wet sites.

Cornus racemosa (Gray Dogwood) 10-15' , white spring flowers, purplish red foliage in fall, white fruits with red stems. Wet to medium dry soil in full sun to part shade. Will grow in poor soil. Spreads to form thickets.

Cornus stolonifera (Red-osier Dogwood) 6-10', rapid-growing, multi-stemmed, showy bright red winter stems, porcelain blue summer fruit attracts birds, reddish purple fall foliage. Moist to wet, full sun to part shade. Deep spreading roots help combat soil erosion.

Myrica pensylvanica (Bayberry) 6-10', glossy, grayish-green leaves, clusters of grayish-white fruits (need one male for pollination). Full sun to part shade, dry to medium wet. Good in groups or massed. Tends to sucker, and form sizeable colonies. Attractive to birds

Potentilla fruticosa (Shrubby cinquefoil) 2-4', attractive grey-green foliage, yellow flowers all summer. Sun to part shade, medium wet to dry, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade. Tolerates poor dry soils. Drought tolerant once established.

Rhus aromatica (Fragrant Sumac) 2' to 6' x 6' to 10' dense irregularly branched shrub, glossy dark green foliage, orange to reddish-purple fall color, red fruit on

females. Suckering growth habit enables it to spread rapidly as groundcover. Sun to part sun, moist to dry, well-drained. Good for massing and bank cover.

Cultivar 'Gro-low' 2'x8', tolerates difficult conditions.

Salix discolor (Pussy Willow) Vigorous medium-large shrub that can stabilize wet slopes and banks. Tolerates sun and shade.

Vaccinium corymbosum (Blueberries) 6-10', twiggy rounded shrub, dense dark green foliage, white May flowers, summer fruits, bright red or yellow fall color, wet to moderately dry, sun to part shade. Sun to part shade, but more fruit and better fall foliage in sun. Medium wet to wet, well-drained acid soils. Shallow-rooted, mulch around the roots. Attracts wildlife.

Viburnum cassinoides (Witherod Viburnum) 5' to 6' dense multi-stemmed shrub with arching branches, creamy white flowers in June, red to purple fall color, pink fruit changing to black. Sun to part shade, dry to fairly wet soil, easy to grow, moderate growth rate. Good in masses, attracts birds.

Viburnum dentatum (Arrowwood) 5' to 9' dense, multistemmed shrub, upright spreading branches, suckers profusely from base. Creamy white flowers in May/June, yellow or red-purple fall color, black fruit attracts birds. Sun to partial shade, dry to fairly wet, easy to grow, good in masses.

Perennials and Ground Covers (preferred moisture levels after name)

Sun to Part Sun:

Asclepias verticillata (Whorled Milkweed)
Aster species wet to dry, depending on type
Baptisia australis (Wild Indigo) dry to medium
Eryngium yuccifolium (Rattlesnake-master) dry to medium
Monarda punctata, fistulosa (Bergamot) medium to wet
Rudbeckia laciniata (Green-Eyed Coneflower) medium
Solidago species (Goldenrod) dry to medium wet, depending on type
Verbena hastata (Blue Vervain) dry to moist

Part shade to shade:

Asarum canadense (Wild Ginger) medium to wet
Aster divaricatus (White Wood Aster) dry to moist
Aquilegia canadensis (Wild Columbine) medium
Chelone glabra (Turtlehead) medium to wet
Cimicifuga racemosa (Black Snakeroot)
Geranium maculatum (Wild Geranium) medium
Lobelia cardinalis (Cardinal Flower) wet to moist

Phlox divaricata (Wild Blue Phlox) medium
Polemonium reptans (Creeping Jacobs Ladder) medium
Polygonatum biflorum (Solomon's Seal) medium to wet
Smilacina racemosa (False Solomon's Seal)
Tiarella cordifolia (Foamflower) medium
Viola species (Violets) dry to medium