

## **Lakeshore Restorations/Buffer Beltways/Landscapes-Plant Selection**

*By Bloomin' Buddies, Lakeshore Restoration and Natural Landscapes; Diane Crandall, Principal*

Welcome to fall everyone! This is a great time to add to your plant collection or to move plants to other areas on your property. You can split them to make more of the ones you love, and move them into bare spots, or make a bold statement in a certain space that is lacking a "pop" of style and color!

The last article discussed planning and creating your desired design. The next step is the color fun. Choosing the plants that grab our hearts, and will thrive in their desired zone, provides us with endless beauty and a bountiful showcase of blooms. On a shoreline, we define the "zone" that the plant belongs in, not only for it to prosper, but for the wonderful benefits that every plant can provide us. It all begins at the "root" as native plants offer natural erosion control due to the depths the roots can reach. Depending on their soil, water, nutrient, and sun exposure needs, the roots can reach depths of up to 10 feet. The roots provide a natural barrier against erosion caused by changing water levels, boating waves, high winds, and ice push. They naturally protect our properties and waters by filtering sediments, chemicals and storm water run-off.

There are many types of plant root structures. A few include: Rhizomes, which grow laterally with roots below and send up shoots; Stolons, which grow laterally with roots at various points along their length; Fibrous, which grow laterally, producing a fine, branched network in all directions; Taproots, which grow vertically, straight down; Adventitious, which form from shoot tissues and originate on the stem; and Clumps, which grow laterally and get larger over time. The root systems of plants are like a woven basket. Over time, by intertwining through their different zones, they will create a strong natural barrier against erosion.

The shoreline planting zones are defined as: Aquatic (below water level), Beltway (between water level and ordinary high-water mark), and Buffer (above ordinary high-water mark). Plants have certain functions and purposes within their zones.

Many varieties of plants are available to choose from in the different zones, so when you begin placement, be sure to remember the ultimate visual desire of the final design. Keep taller plants away from areas where you want an unobstructed view. You can bring in small-to-mid-height plants and use taller ones in the background or to the side to provide a background canvas. Consider blending different leaf styles based on colors, edges, formation, and depth, in addition to the blooms on top. This will keep your shoreline fresh and interesting when the flowering season ends. Put varying heights, clumps, and formations around each other instead of planting in a line, as you have many different viewing spots of the design and will see it from many different angles. In the right spot, a plant will thrive, so remember to pay attention to your sun/shade exposure and soil type (i.e., dry, moist, wet, sandy, loamy, or clay). The wonderful thing about native plants is that once their roots have established themselves, they adapt to changing weather conditions naturally.

Ah, the color! The varying flower head formations! We all have different tastes, so try to determine what bloom seasons and flower heads are your favorites. For instance, are you an all-season-color lover (spring through fall)? Do you prefer the early-to-mid summer colors (early season bloomer)? Or do you favor the mid-summer-early-fall colors (late season bloomer)? You can put together your own custom-blended color show of varying blooming times. Don't forget to keep your vision open to include native grasses, sedges, and bushes in your choices, as they also offer diversification and variety along with the same natural benefits. As an additional

bonus, native plants also come in crawling, climbing, weeping and various ground covers that also offer colorful blooms!

So enjoy the fun, and the best part, of the planting process: the color, the beauty, and the scents that all these wonderful natural plants provide for us, lifting our moods and increasing our happiness! They say that saving the best for last is the icing on the cake. Well in this case it's very true. These plants will also attract a variety of wildlife: bumble bees, humming birds, finches, songbirds, butterflies, fish, frogs, turtles, and more!

This last note is for the ladies: remember that these plants make wonderful fresh or dried arrangements. Cut flowers, place them in a vase with water, then let them dry out. It is as easy as that! What a great way to brighten winter days, and right from your own yard!

Harvest time brings comfort foods, football games, beautiful holidays and colder weather. So, why not use some of this time for your spring garden preparation and planning? This will be a great help as a reminder that winter does come to an end.

