

# A Practical Guide to Restoring Shoreland Habitat

By Audrey Green, Walworth County Lake Specialist

## Step One: Planning

Evaluate the site: soil (a soil test is often the best method), slope, moisture, light conditions, erosion potential, access points, shoreline traffic patterns, pier placement.

Evaluate existing vegetation: identify native species for preservation and exotic species for removal.

Determine species native to the area that will thrive with your given site conditions. Consult local experts for assistance.

Determine which restoration strategy or combination of approaches will be most effective:

Preservation of existing native vegetation, with selective planning if necessary.

Natural recovery (eliminating mowing), to allow dormant native seed bank to reestablish itself. This method is effective where turf grasses are not established and fill has not covered the original soil.

Accelerated recovery, introducing more mature plantings of native trees, shrubs, grasses, flowers and wetland plants.

Consider your goals: restoring habitat, aesthetics, erosion control, nutrient buffer, noise control, goose control, privacy.

Create a rough sketch of your vision, incorporating the above elements.

## Step Two: Secure Plant Material

Decide which native plant species you intend to plant. Find a reliable supplier. Order plants and find out when you can expect delivery.

## Step Three: Killing Existing Herbaceous Vegetation Using:

Black Plastic – the most effective (when left in place long enough) and environmentally friendly method; must be applied for 4 – 6 weeks during early/mid summer.

OR

Herbicide – Roundup is one of the safest and best; vegetation must be actively growing; site may require more concentrated herbicide when existing plant matter is dense and/or woody; check with DNR for permit for near-water application; must be applied to existing vegetation 4-6 days before planting a buffer.

#### Step Four: Mulch

After using either method from step 3, when you are sure that all existing vegetation is dead, lay down a 2-3 inch layer of weed free mulch over the dead vegetation.

#### Step Five: Planting

Move mulch aside; dig hole with transplanting spade, bulb planter, or bulb-planting drill. Remove plug from container, separate roots if necessary, plant, cover with soil, return mulch around (not touching) plant.

#### Step Six: Water

Plantings need supplemental watering the first year of establishment because their root systems are small. The second season, watering will only be necessary during long dry periods. Giving plants a good soaking less frequently is better than watering frequently, in small amounts.

#### Step Seven: Weed

Diligent weeding throughout the first season is very important to give your plantings the best competitive edge.

#### Repeat Steps Six & Seven as Needed

Note: For additional information on all of the steps listed above and for assistance with selecting native plants for your site, please contact Audrey Greene, Lake Specialist (262) 741-3460 or email: [agreen@co.walworth.wi.us](mailto:agreen@co.walworth.wi.us)