

What Can Lakeshore Owners Do? Get Immediate Results!

1. **Simply stop mowing.** If you mow near the shoreline, back up 25-50 ft to create a buffer zone to protect the lake. Native plants will automatically spring up within about 10 ft from the water! (if no pesticides or fertilizer is used).
2. **Stop broadcast pesticides and fertilizer**, often used on lawns but also as commercial mosquito spray. Save money! And more importantly, save your enjoyment of lakeshore as nesting birds return, because there will be insects for their baby birds to eat. The change is remarkable.
3. **Allow** dead trees or limbs that fall into the water to stay in place, if possible, **to create habitat** for fish and other wildlife. Less work and expense!
4. If your property already has riprap, **allow native plants to grow there** without any trimming. If there is impervious coverage under the rocks, such as plastic sheeting, cut into it to allow natives to emerge.
5. Check labels and **refuse to buy any spot fertilizer containing phosphorus**, which is present in most “organic” fertilizers (made from animal waste) and is advertised as good because it is “natural”, but it is not safe or healthy for lakes. According to Minnesota law, phosphorus-containing fertilizer cannot be applied to lawns (with some exceptions), but it is not illegal to sell it. When faced with a choice, please choose to protect our lakes.
6. Above all, **resist the impulse to be neat and tidy**; instead, tap into your *wild side!* Imagine the mystery and grandeur of natural shoreland, as we have in the Pillsbury State Forest along Gull Lake’s western shore, and bring it home to your lakeshore. When lakeshore owners let native plants grow, they realize the pleasures of a whole new natural world.



What About Doing Even More? *The Miracle of Native Plants*

Taking the next step to seeding or planting **native plants** (unless you already have natural lakeshore) is how you may want to earn the Lake Steward Award, have a tremendous impact on habitat, and create sustainable water quality for your children and grandchildren. Native plants resist drought and flooding that may be in our future, and they provide food as nectar, nuts and berries for butterflies and other wildlife.

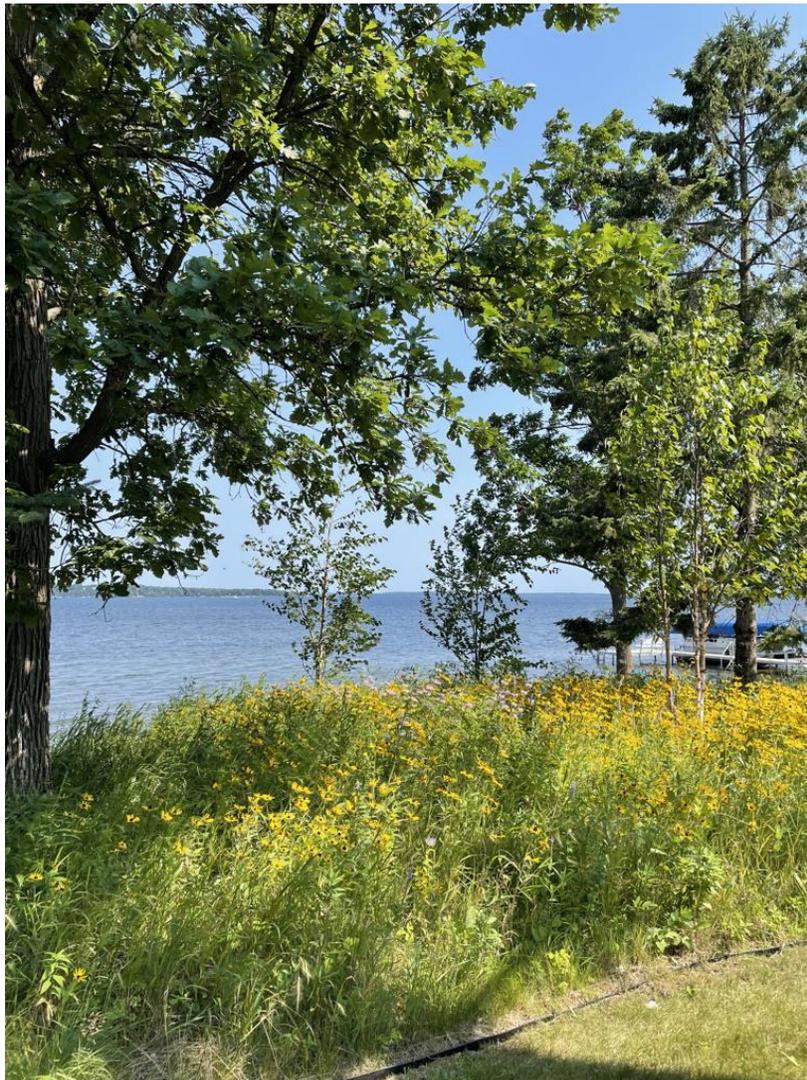
“Cultivars”, the showy plants derived from native plants and available in many commercial nurseries, are purchased by homeowners because they have large blossoms. But so much is lost for the lakes when they broadly replace native plants. **Natives have deep roots** that hold the soil to **prevent erosion**, so they protect your property while they enhance our enjoyment of wildlife that inhabits natural lakeshore.



How to Replace Lawn with Native Plants

1. **Shrink the lawn** by reducing mowing as much as possible. Broad areas of lawn are a racetrack for runoff as they become impacted by mowing, and they become a burden of work and expense for homeowners.
2. As above, if you **stop mowing near the water**, while stopping fertilizer and pesticides, native plants like milkweed, the host plant for the monarch butterfly, can take over!
3. If you have mowed lawn that is sparse and has not been treated with fertilizer or pesticides, it is often possible to rake the area and **scatter native seeds**, as in this video: How to Seed and Plant Natives, MNL
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8AOLSvuLE0>
Native seeds can be purchased at sources listed in the Resources section.

4. If the **lawn is well-established, especially more than 10 ft from the waterline, it may need to be treated** to eliminate lawn grass so that native plants can be seeded or planted. There are several methods that avoid the use of herbicides: burning (quick and efficient, usually by contractor), **solarization** (heavy plastic sheets cover the lawn to heat the soil for 6-8 weeks) and **layering** (biodegradable cardboard covers the ground, is watered and covered in compost for 2 months, then soil can be directly reseeded). All will give you a fresh slate for natives to grow and protect our lakes.
5. For a small fee, Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Cass or Crow Wing County can visit your property and offer a plan that you can carry out as a do-it-yourself or with professional help. **Funding from both GCOLA and the Counties is available**, and GCOLA Lake Steward can help you access those funds for projects that help reach Lake Steward goals for improving water quality and habitat. See “Cost Share Funding”.

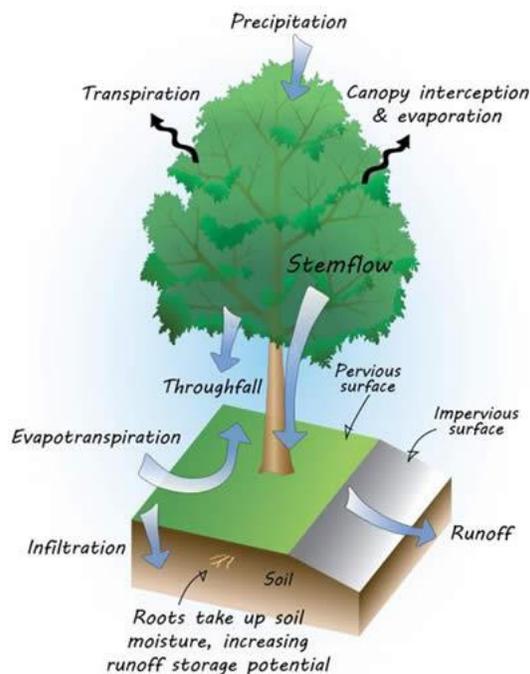


A Word About Trees



The Gull Chain of Lakes was originally forested, as we can see in the Pillsbury State Forest along Gull Lake's western shore. **Natural forested lakeshore is the most protective** of lake water quality. Trees are powerful in preventing runoff because the canopy intercepts rain, and the roots both protect against erosion and absorb soil moisture, see diagram at left.

Minnesota State Law, the Shoreland Management Act, prohibits tree removal along lakeshore, or any clear cutting within 1,000 ft of the lake. However, shoreland owners often find ways to remove trees for a better view, only to find that bare lakeshore is hot, the direct sun makes it uncomfortable to sit or read devices, and it is noisy and there is no privacy, because the waters are public. Unfortunately, "you don't know what you've lost 'til it's gone". Please make every effort to preserve trees on your property, especially along the shoreline, for your own enjoyment, and because it is the natural home for wildlife.



Courtesy of the EPA

Consider planting trees, even every year, and enjoy watching them grow in leaps and bounds each season. **GCOLA gives away free tree seedlings every May**; the next date is Saturday May 14, 2022. In the face of drought and higher air and lake temperatures in the future, native trees and plants are proven survivors, and trees offer the cooling shade and privacy that we all enjoy.