

Creating a Lakescaping Plan

“Keep it natural,” explains Alana Haley, a landscape designer with Pine Hill Nursery 10 miles north of Elk Rapids on U.S. 31. “Protecting water quality to the edge of the lake or river is one of our big priorities.”

Haley says more and more customers want to coordinate a landscaping plan that helps protect water quality along their lakefront properties. This process called “lakescaping” minimizes lawns, promotes buffer zones, emphasizes native plants, and uses organic fertilizers.

“We’ve been doing this for many years,” Haley says. “It’s an education process as people move from traditional lawns to lakescaping to help reduce their footprint on shoreline properties. More and more of our customers are asking for alternatives and are choosing to do the right thing.”

“Not only can we design a lakescaping plan, we can provide all of the necessary plants and organic fertilizers to get the job done,” Haley says. “Different types of shorelines lead to different designs, but the idea all along is to help protect water quality.”

Lake experts agree that a lakescaping plan using organic, no-phosphorus fertilizers along with planting native plants and perennial gardens helps protect water quality along Antrim County’s Chain of Lakes. When too much phosphorus makes its way from lawns into lakes and streams, it promotes the rapid weed growth and algae. Lakescaping provides a filter to capture and cleanse pollutant-carrying runoff before it reaches the water.

Haley says the plan should include perennials, shrubs, small trees and native plants. “Eliminating traditional lawns also helps control erosion and creates additional habitat for wildlife.”

Some of the suggested plants to be included in a lakescaping plan include: Common Juniper, Grow-low Sumac, Purple Coneflower, Sweetspire, False Sunflower, Michigan Holly, shrubby St. Johnwort, and Blue Hair grass. All are available at Pine Hill Nursery.

“Not only does a lakescaping plan make the shoreline look more beautiful,” Haley says, “It also is much less expensive to maintain and provides more leisure time for people to enjoy the water.”

Other tips to a successful lakescaping plan include:



- Using pervious paving stones when planning patios and pathways
- Modifying your existing landscape by incorporating depressions or adding borders designed to capture water runoff
- Considering a substantial reduction in the square footage of your turf grass. Using ground cover can add visual appeal and diminish your impact on water quality