

## Lakescaping: Not Just Another Pretty Lawn

Ask any lake expert about one of the most important ways to maintain water quality in the Antrim County Chain of Lakes area, and you'll almost always hear "keep it natural." This can easily be accomplished by shoreline property owners using a concept called "lakescaping."



Lakescaping, or landscaping along lakefront properties, emphasizes natural plantings utilizing native flowers, grasses, trees and shrubs while minimizing turf lawn. With this approach the homeowner makes environmentally sound decisions that help preserve the character and quality of the land as well as protecting water quality. The concept emphasizes planting native plants that do not require supplemental water, fertilizers, pesticides or best of all, excessive maintenance.

Traditional lawns have few of the benefits of a more natural shoreline and provide little wildlife habitat. They also need frequent maintenance and are often overfertilized.

Did you know that excess fertilizers, pesticides, and other materials found around shoreline home sites wash into the lake after a heavy rain? These substances can alter the water's chemical and biological characteristics, and degrade water quality. Be sure to use a phosphorus-free lawn fertilizer. The nutrient code on the fertilizer bag should have a zero as the middle number to indicate it is phosphorous-free.

More and more lakefront owners are turning to lakescaping as a popular alternative. Stop by one of our local nurseries to get shoreline-friendly tips, good advice, and help with a lakescaping plan. Many of these nurseries also supply the types of plants used in this concept.

Some of the benefits of lakescaping are:

- Providing habitat for a wide variety of wildlife
- Preventing shoreline erosion
- Filtering pollutants and runoff that degrade water quality
- Reducing yard maintenance and providing more leisure time
- Increasing property value

Lakescaping is one way local citizens can be involved in maintaining our incredible water quality along the Chain of Lakes. From Torch Lake to Intermediate Lake, all the way down to Lake Skegemog, installing native lakescaping costs 48 percent less than traditional landscaping. No wonder the lakescaping concept is becoming so popular!