



Beautiful Lakeshore Buffer Gardens

Flathead Lake is one of the cleanest large lakes in the populated world. Its unmatched beauty and clarity draw people here from around the world. The area is growing at a fast rate, and increasing development can lead to more polluted storm water runoff reaching the lake and watershed.

If you live along Flathead Lake or one of the many tributaries that feed it, you can help protect clean water from harmful polluted runoff (also called nonpoint source pollution) by simply planting a beautiful buffer garden or supplementing the plants and vegetation in your riparian area.

Why should we care?

Riparian areas can filter out pollutants.

Riparian areas are the lands adjacent to lakes, rivers, and streams. These areas are nearly as vital to the health and beauty of a waterway as the water itself. When left in a natural state, riparian areas...

- serve as the “kidneys of the lake” by filtering out nutrients and pollutants before they can reach the lake or river.
- provide habitat for a large variety of birds and other wildlife, and serve as migration routes between habitats for much wildlife. According to the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), close to 60% of Montana’s threatened and endangered species rely on riparian areas for survival!
- recharge our groundwater.
- provide shade to streams, keeping light and temperature conditions optimal for aquatic plants, fish, and other animals.
- stabilize streambanks and reduce floodwater velocity and damage.

Studies have estimated that a vegetated riparian zone, or enhanced buffer garden, can filter out 60-90% of sediments and pollution in storm water runoff bound for our lakes and rivers.



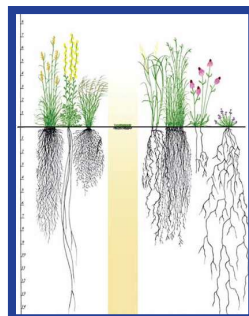
What is a buffer garden?

Beautiful flowers protect clean water.

In some places, the riparian area may have been altered by past land use practices, and no longer functioning to protect the lake and clean water. If your riparian area needs restoring or enhancing, consider creating a buffer garden.

A buffer garden is simply a beautiful perennial garden, with plants you choose.

The plants' root systems filter out sediments, pollution, and nutrients from storm water runoff bound for Flathead Lake and its tributaries. The root system of a lawn is too shallow to do this.



Turf grass roots vs. native plant roots

What can you do?

Enhance the beauty of your shoreline.

Enhance the beauty of your shoreline, provide habitat for birds and butterflies, add to your property value, reduce your yard work, and help keep Flathead Lake and Watershed clean by creating a unique buffer garden, or improving your existing shoreline.



Install a lakeshore buffer garden.

Remove areas of grass near the shoreline, and replace with beautiful native flowers and shrubs. These plants can filter out more sediments and pollutants than turf grass



Use native Montana plants.

Native plants are specially adapted to our local climate and native pests and insects. They require less maintenance, water, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.



Become a member of the Lakers.

Become a member and support our work to protect our watershed. Learn more about what you can do to protect clean water in your daily life.

LEARN MORE

Montana Native Plant Society
mtnativeplants.org

Center for Native Plants
centerfornativeplants.com

Your local nursery

Flathead Conservation District
flatheadcd.org

Lake County Conservation District
lakecountyconservationdistrict.org

The **Flathead Lakers** can help you create a buffer garden to restore your riparian area and help protect clean water. We can provide site-specific suggestions based on your location and preferences.

Contact us for a site visit, or more information.

Visit flatheadlakers.org



**FLATHEAD
LAKERS**
DEFENDERS OF THE WATERSHED

The Flathead Lakers provides leadership and a strong voice for protecting and improving water quality through our programs and advocacy since 1958.

PO BOX 70 | POLSON, MT 59860
406.883.1346 | FLATHEADLAKERS.ORG