

# The Buffer Zone...

is that strip of vegetation located between developed land and a lake, stream or wetland. A good buffer protects the water, adds beauty and provides habitat for wildlife!

## Lawns and Shoreline do not mix!



The most common mistake is planting lawn to the water's edge. Turf grasses have shallow roots, increasing the risk of shoreline erosion. Also, lawns provide limited habitat for wildlife.

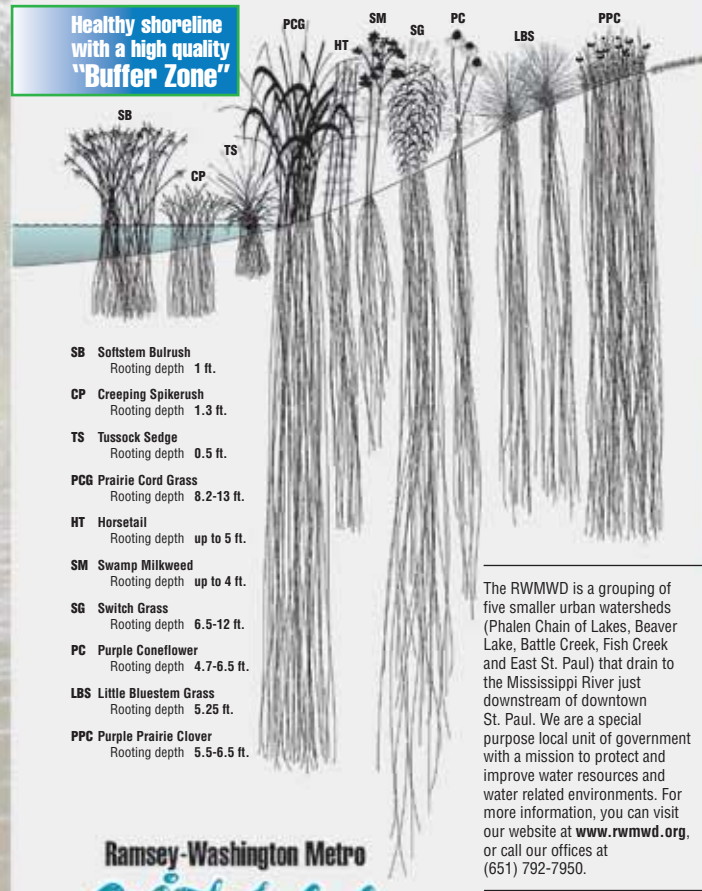
## Protect the Water, provide a Buffer!



It is not necessary to turn your entire yard into a natural prairie or forest to protect a body of water. It is easy to reach a balance between a high quality buffer along the shore and a functional yard closer to your house.

# Native plants protect your shore

Turf grass has a shallow root system. Shorelines with turf grass commonly erode. Native plants compose a high quality buffer. Their deep root systems resist erosion and stabilize shorelines.



Ramsey-Washington Metro  
**Watershed**  
District

The RWMWD is a grouping of five smaller urban watersheds (Phalen Chain of Lakes, Beaver Lake, Battle Creek, Fish Creek and East St. Paul) that drain to the Mississippi River just downstream of downtown St. Paul. We are a special purpose local unit of government with a mission to protect and improve water resources and water related environments. For more information, you can visit our website at [www.rwmwd.org](http://www.rwmwd.org), or call our offices at (651) 792-7950.

**(651) 792-7950**  
[www.rwmwd.org](http://www.rwmwd.org)

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# The Buffer Zone

(that area along the water's edge)



## It's real estate worth protecting!

Ramsey-Washington Metro

**Watershed**  
District



*"I have never seen a high quality wetland without a high quality buffer surrounding it."*

— Jack Frost, RWMWD Board of Managers

## Six reasons why a buffer makes for a better wetland

### 1. Slows and filters runoff.

A good buffer protects your lake, stream, or wetland by slowing runoff and allowing it to soak into the ground.



### 2. Stabilizes shoreline.

Buffers prevent fluctuating water levels, moving ice, flooding, surface runoff and wave action from eroding your shoreline.

### 3. Provides habitat.

The water's edge provides food and cover for birds, butterflies, turtles and other wildlife. A good buffer can be a very diverse habitat.

### 4. Enhances aesthetics.

Natural buffers beautify your yard with a variety of colorful wildflowers that bloom throughout the season. Buffers can also create a natural screen, increasing privacy.

### 5. Increases property value.

A high quality buffer is an asset that can add resale value.

### 6. Limits nuisance wildlife.

A native plant buffer creates a natural barrier to Canada geese.



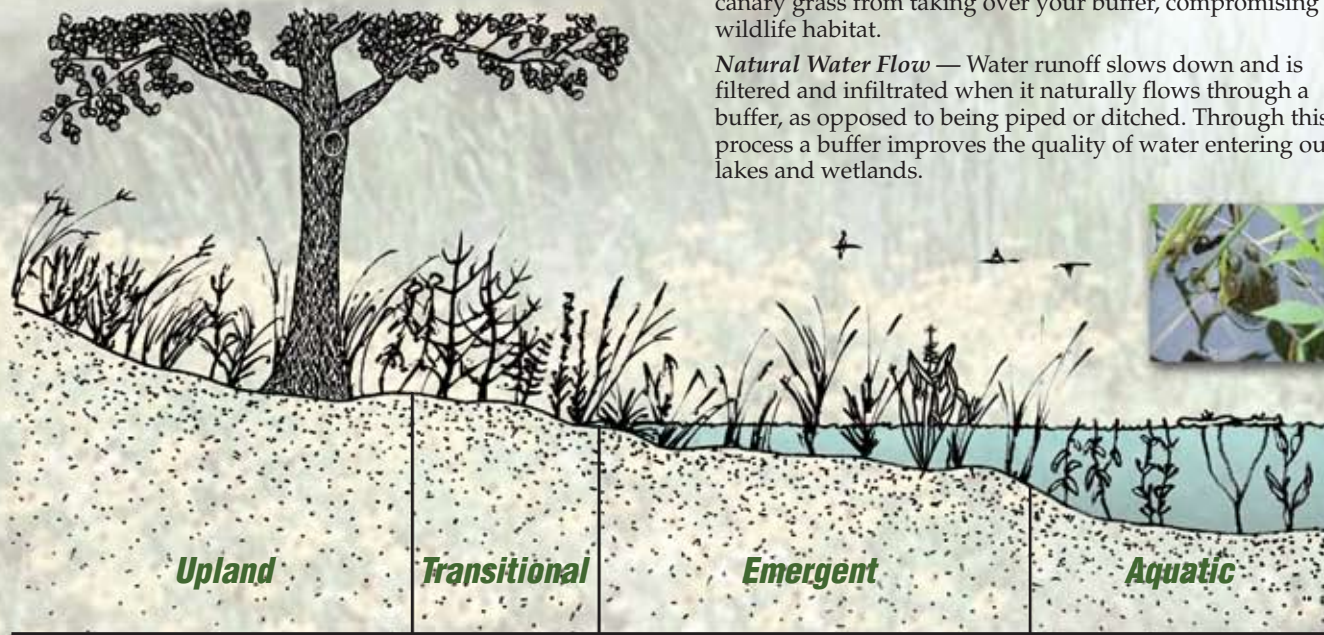
## What makes a good buffer?

**Wider is Better** — The wider the buffer the greater the benefit. But even a 10-foot buffer is better than no buffer at all.

**Natural Vegetation** — A mix of native plant species – trees, grasses, and wildflowers – adds to buffer quality and improves wildlife habitat. Deep-rooted native plants are best adapted to hold soils in place.

**Weed Management** — Like any urban landscape your buffer needs maintenance. Periodic weeding will prevent invasive species such as purple loosestrife, buckthorn and reed canary grass from taking over your buffer, compromising wildlife habitat.

**Natural Water Flow** — Water runoff slows down and is filtered and infiltrated when it naturally flows through a buffer, as opposed to being piped or ditched. Through this process a buffer improves the quality of water entering our lakes and wetlands.



**The ideal buffer has a mix of native species in all four plant zones.**

## How to create (or enhance) your own buffer

There are three main steps to creating or enhancing your own buffer. We recommend that you use the resources listed below to get started.

### 1. Study your property —

Evaluate and learn about your shoreline or wetland edge. What type of plants are growing there? Do you have an undisturbed buffer? How wide is it? Are there signs of erosion?

### 2. Create a plan —

Determine your buffer area. Research ways to remove invasive plant species. Decide on methods to increase native plant species diversity – e.g., stop mowing, seed selected areas and plant along the water. Select appropriate plant species. If erosion is a concern, choose appropriate methods of soil stabilization, which may include regrading. (Note: A permit may be needed to plant below the Normal Water Level – Call MN DNR Central Region at 651.722.7956 for more information.)

### 3. Implement your plan —

Prepare your site. Stop mowing. Spread out and slow down water flow to minimize erosion. Remove invasive weed species and turf grass. Plant or seed your buffer. Maintain your natural buffer – e.g., water the first year, weed, and replant bare spots. Watch for new native plant species becoming established. Record your observations. Share your knowledge with others!

## Resources and additional information

(Please call the Watershed District at 651.792.7950 if you do not have web access and would like more information on buffers.)

Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District  
[www.rwmwd.org](http://www.rwmwd.org)

University of Minnesota – Shoreland Management  
[www.shorelandmanagement.org](http://www.shorelandmanagement.org)

List of Minnesota native plant suppliers  
[www.dnr.state.us/gardens/nativeplants/suppliers.html](http://www.dnr.state.us/gardens/nativeplants/suppliers.html)

Grants for purchasing native plants in Ramsey County  
[www.ramseyconservation.org/swcd/home.html](http://www.ramseyconservation.org/swcd/home.html)

MN DNR Restore your Shore – CD and book resources  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us/restoreyourshore/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/restoreyourshore/index.html)