



# GAMING Nature Centre

## Native Plants

A native plant is usually defined as one that was growing naturally in a specific area before European settlement. Still today, the most ideal landscape is one where a broad range of plants occur naturally, or where they are planted to fit the local area's, soil and climatic conditions, as well as suit the preferences of the landowner. By choosing plant species native to your ecoregion, you will help sustain biodiversity. Many types of animals, insects and even fish need native vegetation for their own survival and these plants rely on them equally as well for seed distribution and pollination.

It is imperative that you keep your property well vegetated. Native trees and plants not only provide habitat for wildlife they hold soil in place on slopes, prevent erosion, and filter out pollution that could contaminate water. Trees and other plants, when landscaped properly, can be used to save you money on your energy costs. Talk to an experienced landscaper or employ a few soil bioengineering techniques:

- Plants knit the waterfront together; roots act like rebar in concrete.
- Reduce energy of waves, currents, and wind.
- Provide shade, channel wind.
- Foliage reduces energy of rainfall; prevents excess runoff.
- Inexpensive and attractive way of controlling shoreline erosion.

### NATIVE SPECIES

Shrub willow  
*Salix eriocephala*



Red osier dogwood  
*Comus stolonifera*



Virginia creeper  
*Parthenocissus vitacea*



Shrub willow  
*Salix eriocephala*

### Why Willows?

Willows are "the rebar of shorelines"; they are frequently used to help stabilize freshwater shorelines that are eroding:

- Their extensive root systems anchor soil together along fragile banks and withstand the forces of ice drift in lakes and rivers, and flood waters. Willows can root in slopes with up to a 2:1 gradient.
- Their stems help slow flood waters and winds, thus reducing soil erosion.
- They thrive in damp, boggy soil common along riverbanks, lakeshores, and flood plains.
- They can be grown inexpensively from cuttings taken from existing plants.
- They grow quickly (most willows are mature enough to reproduce in only four years).
- Their flexible branches bend under the pressure of water or ice and continue to protect soil.
- Willows survive broken branches and will send out new shoots easily.
- They provide food, shelter and a place to live for birds and other wildlife.
- There are a wide variety of native species to choose from, from tree-size to shrub-size.

Avoid weeping willows, which are non-native.

## ***How do I know if I have Native Plants?***

The easiest way to tell whether or not your shoreline harbours native plants is to carefully inspect an area which you think has not been altered or disturbed and compare it to your shoreline. However, do keep in mind that some non-native, invasive plants have become widespread and common and you may think they are native to your area. The next step is to consult a comprehensive native plant guide to identify the plants growing on your property. It is also important to learn about non-native, invasive plants that may be growing in your area; many of these are causing very serious damage to our natural environment. Check for these alien invaders, and take appropriate steps to remove them, substituting native plants in their place.



## ***Before you start planting, do some planning:***



- Make a brief sketch plan of your property, noting locations of roads and buildings; shoreline features; slopes; vegetation areas, and any other special natural features. A sketch plan helps you identify where you feel comfortable introducing native shrubs and trees.
- Look at the site conditions on your property aspect (which direction it faces), type of soil, light, moisture, and degree of slope. These will all influence your planning.
- Identify how much of your shoreline you will feel comfortable letting revert to nature. Even a small area is a good start. Identify what you need for recreation; are there other ways of meeting your recreational needs with less use of the shoreline? A good rule of thumb is to let 80% of the shoreline revert to nature, leaving 20% for human use – dock, swimming area, etc.
- If you are planting in an established lawn, consider how you are going to handle the turf. You can either remove just enough to plant your shrubs and trees, or you can remove (by covering with black plastic or carpet pieces) larger sections and seed or replant with a variety of native grasses, perennials, shrubs, and trees.
- If a manicured landscaped look is very important to you, consider hiring a landscape architect who specializes in native plants. There are many native plants that can look attractive.
- Aim for the layered look; you'll help protect your shoreline – and you'll help wildlife too! Incorporate low lying ground cover, tall grass and wildflowers, shrubs, small trees and vines and, finally, tall trees. This way, you will create a more interesting landscape with a variety of shrubs and trees with different root masses to help bind your soil and hold your shoreline together. You will also create homes for a variety of wildlife.
- Remember to protect the vegetation that grows in water – this is critical for helping protect your shoreline, as well as for many forms of wildlife.

## ***Gamiing Nature Centre Can Help:***

We offer free consultations for both shoreline and habitat restoration projects as well as Naturalized Garden projects. Gamiing also has a Native Plant Nursery on site which houses trees, shrubs, vines and wildflowers that can help improve the biodiversity and health of your property.

### **For More Information:**

**Gamiing Nature Centre  
1884 Pigeon Lake Rd.**

**Lindsay, Ontario, Canada K9V 4R5**

**Phone: 705-799-7083 or [info@gamiing.org](mailto:info@gamiing.org) or visit [www.gamiing.org](http://www.gamiing.org)**