

Design and Planting Tips

Before planting, evaluate your property based on the criteria listed below. If it helps, make a sketch of your property to guide your decisions.

Sun

The direction your yard faces and the location of existing trees and buildings determines how much sun or shade there is. On a sunny day, make note of which areas get morning sun, which get afternoon sun and which get none at all.

Soil Moisture

Some plants prefer more moisture, while others are better at tolerating drought. Moisture loving plants will do better in low spots or nearer the shoreline. Higher spots away from the water will need plants that prefer drier soils.

Soil pH

Soils can be limey, neutral or acidic. Since many plants have soil pH preferences, testing the pH of your soil can help you make more informed plant selections. Cornell Cooperative Extension and many local nurseries sell soil test kits.

Problem areas

Do you have an eroding bank? Some plants are better at controlling erosion on banks than others. In the planting guide that follows look for plants that are good bank covers or consider using wattles made from cuttings of shrub willow or dogwood. If the slope of your bank is greater than 50% or 2:1 horizontal run to vertical rise, additional measures may be necessary. Very steep slopes may require the use of engineered structures such as sea walls.

Views

Which views do you like and which would you like to do away with? Careful placement of different sized trees and shrubs can help enhance views that are valuable and can help screen less desirable views, such as neighboring buildings, docks, parking areas and utility right of ways. Instead of automatically removing the existing shrubs and trees on your property, consider pruning them. A certified arborist can help you prune your trees in a manner that improves the view while protecting the natural integrity of your property.

Activities and Access


Consider your common activities and leave enough open area to conduct them. For example, if you have a boat, you need to allow enough access to the shore to launch it. Plan-out the best way for people to get down to the water without treading over existing vegetation.


Zone


Zone maps divide a geographical area into zones based upon minimum winter temperatures. A zone 5 plant will be able to survive the winter temperatures in zone 5 or be hardy in zone 5. The plants included in the list that follows are hardy for most of the Finger Lakes region (zones 4-6). While some plants may survive in a sheltered spot north of their recommended zone, it is usually best to plant reliable hardy species. If you are uncertain about the suitability of a plant for your locale, check with a local nursery.





Consider the Following Planting and Maintenance Tips as You Plan Your Project.





 Determine where the high water mark is along the streambank or shoreline. If you will be disturbing the soil below the high water mark, you may need a permit. In New York State contact the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).


 Plant shrubs and trees in the early spring or fall. This allows the plant to adapt to its new environment before summer droughts set in and further stresses it.


 Choose the appropriate size plant for your property. Larger plants cost more money and may not transplant as well as smaller plants. However, larger plants create more of an instant landscape and may stabilize your bank faster. Make your decisions accordingly.


 You may need to protect the base of the bank from scour and erosion by using existing rock or rip rap. Filter fabric should be placed behind the rock to keep soil particles back but allow ground water to escape.

 Control for erosion during and after planting. When planting a landscape, you will be disturbing the soil. Depending upon the slope, you may need to use a landscape fabric to keep the soil or mulch in place.

 Mulch to keep soil moisture in and protect the base of the shrub.

 Do not apply fertilizer at the time of planting.

 Water, Water, Water! If you plant in the spring or summer, your plants will need to be watered twice a week through the first growing season, and maybe more often during dry, hot spells. Early morning is the best time to water.

 Weed, especially during the first year when your planting is just getting established and less able to tolerate competition. Mulching and weeding when the weeds are still small will make the job easier. It is also easier to pull out those unwanted green things when the ground is moist.

