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Upper Big Sioux River WP
SD Game Fish and Parks
NE Glacial Lakes WP
Big Sioux Nursery
Lake Poinsett WP
Codington Conservation District

Upper Big Sioux River Watershed Project
800 - 10th Street NW #3
Watertown, SD 57201

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Beyond Bluegrass

What can you do when your lawn washes out due to water and wind erosion? How can you protect your property AND the water quality of the lake?

Plant something besides bluegrass! The advantages to planting more durable and stronger-rooted plants are: deeper, stronger roots that hold the soil and prevent erosion; the colorful attraction of pollinating wildflowers for butterflies and birds, and the restoration of shorelines and riverbanks. This protection adds to the beauty of your property and to the health of the local water bodies.

Here is your introduction to some thinking outside the traditional landscaping 'box'. There really is life after lawn care! With minimal expense, preparation, and maintenance, wildflowers, grasses, shrubs and trees will hold your property in place. Plantings can be incorporated into the riprap, above it, and/or in place of the usual high-maintenance lawn. Natural beauty, healthy protection, and wildlife will be your reward. You can create attractive yards that will require little fertilizer or irrigation to keep them healthy and vibrant.

Beyond Bluegrass: soft practice alternatives for bluegrass lawns around lakes, storm sewers, creeks, or drainage areas

While the species suggested herein are native grasses and flowers proven to grow in our area, other species may also be suitable. Do your research!

Site Prep and Design

To prepare your site it is important to kill off the existing lawn/weeds. This can be accomplished in a couple of ways. You can smother out the undesirables by laying out black plastic sheets and anchoring them down. This is an effective method and may take up to two months. The other method is to use a glyphosate product (Roundup). Be sure to read and understand the label directions. You may lightly till the area to make planting easier but is not entirely necessary.

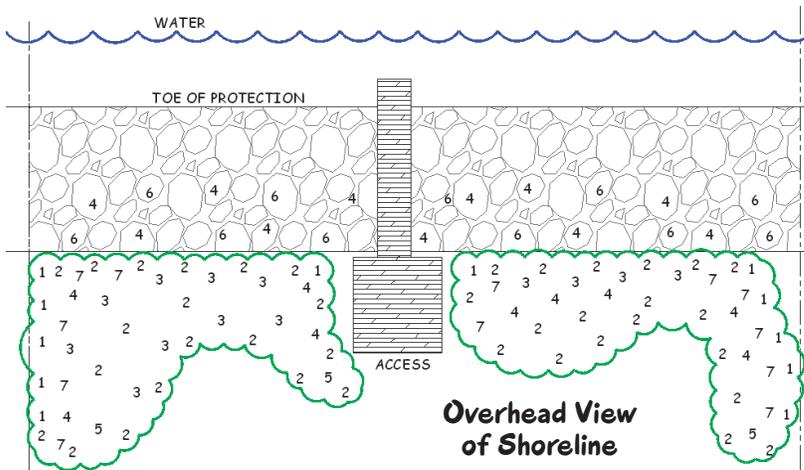
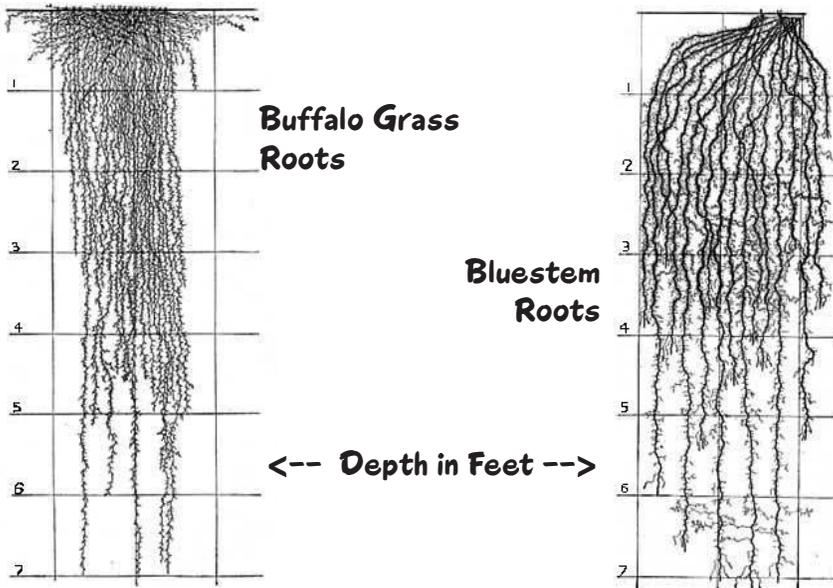
Make a sketch of your planting area to plan out where you would like each species. Using taller types to the outside and shorter towards the center will add value to your yard by "framing" the view of your lakeshore. Fill in around taller flowering plants with a low growing ground cover like buffalo grass to lock in topsoil and resist erosion. Spacing in flowering species will add interest and variety throughout the growing season and draw in beneficial birds and insects (mosquito eaters). Be sure to leave room to grow!

Put down some roots!

Bluegrass roots are typically only as deep as the grass is tall. This doesn't provide much protection when the waves come crashing up onto your yard. The suggested species below have deep root systems several feet deep that trap and hold the soil to keep it from washing away. If using plugs, space them

If a decorative planting area is not your thing, consider changing the grass species that you have. A mix of Buffalo grass, Blue Grama, Sweetgrass and Tall Fescue can be maintained as a lawn, with the benefits of a deeper root system.

1-3' apart and intersperse with wildflowers. Mulch with grass clippings or compost until the plants are well established. Blend native grasses into the boundary with your existing lawn for a seamless transition into your garden planting. With a little planning you can create a beautiful flower/decorative grass garden that is low in maintenance and functions as a filter strip and soil erosion control.



Suggested Species that will grow almost anywhere.

1. Big Bluestem / Indian Grass
2. Buffalo Grass / Blue Grama / Side Oats Grama
3. Coneflower / Blazing Star / Black-Eyed Susan
4. False Indigo / Dogwood
5. Your Favorite Tree
6. Grapes / Woodbine
7. Purple Prairie Clover / Dropseed

Resources/More information:

Codington Conservation District
<http://codingtoncd.org>
 605-882-4989

Hamlin Conservation District
<http://hamlincd.org>
 Plants & crew available
 605-783-3353

Minnesota DNR Shoreline Restoration
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/restoreyourshore/index.html>

Northeast Glacial Lakes Watershed
<http://neglwatersheds.org/>
 605-345-4661 ext 118

NDSU Extension Service
<http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/horticulture/trees-and-shrubs-for-northern-great-plains-landscapes>

SD GF&P
 605-345-3381
 Has a demo cost- share program

Upper Big Sioux River Watershed Project
 605-882-5250 ubsrw@watertownsd.us

USDA NRCS PLANTS database
<http://plants.usda.gov/index.html>

Online garden planners: some are free and some are trial versions and some may be purchased.

