

# 50 WAYS TO LOVE YOUR LAKE!

## PLANTING & LANDSCAPING



- 1 Practice natural yard care.** Build healthy soil. Use the right plant for your site. Water the right amount. Think twice before using pesticides. Practice natural lawn care.
- 2 Go native.** Native plants are adapted to our climate and thrive with little maintenance, fertilizer and water.
- 3 Plant a buffer** between your lawn and your lake. It will help decrease run-off from your property, and geese will stay away to boot!
- 4 Landscape to slow rainwater run off** between your house and the lake, making it easier for water to soak into the ground. Place small swales where water naturally drains off your property, create twists in your paths or driveways, or plant a rain garden – using water tolerant plants that absorb rainfall.
- 5 Plant trees and shrubs** on your property in places that allow them to frame your view of the water, rather than obstruct it, even when they have reached mature size.
- 6 Plant extra shoreline plants for critters.** Beavers, otters and muskrats find willows and dogwoods tasty treats and good for building.
- 7 Garden to benefit nature.** Create a wildlife sanctuary in your backyard. Place emergent plants on a small part of your beach. Plant decorative, non-native aquatic plants in a separate water feature, not along your shoreline.
- 8 Reduce or eliminate pesticides or herbicides.** Gardening chemicals end up in the lake in measurable amounts. Pesticides also kill good bugs; can poison birds and fish; and should be used sparingly around children and pets.
- 9 Use organic, slow-release fertilizers on your lawn** – or none at all! Conventional fertilizers and weed-and-feed type products are released all at once and end up mostly in the lake. Use phosphorus-free or slow-release natural fertilizers on your lawn areas.
- 10 Shrink your lawn.** Less lawn = less maintenance, mowing, watering, fertilizing, money and more rain soaking into the ground instead of running off into the lake. Geese love large lawns. Reduce your lawn, reduce your fowl visitors.
- 11 Replace concrete and asphalt** with permeable alternatives. Rather than letting water flow off your driveway, walkways and outdoor living spaces, check out alternatives that let rain soak in like “grasscrete,” gravel, pavers, or other surfaces.
- 12 Leave large trees** and shrubs on your property to create wildlife habitat and shade, especially over the water.
- 13 Keep your shoreline natural.** Bulkheads and artificially sandy beaches can destroy critical habitat for fish, cause erosion and add toxins to the lake.

## WEEDS & TROUBLESHOOTING



- 14 Learn to identify the noxious weeds on your lake.** Check for noxious weeds, such as Eurasian milfoil, fragrant waterlily, Brazilian elodea, purple loosestrife and yellow flag iris. Learn what you can do to control and eradicate them before it becomes a problem and who to notify if it does.
- 15 Pull up or cut lily pads.** Fragrant waterlily (pink or white flowers) is a noxious weed. If uncontrolled, it can overcome small lakes. But don't confuse it with the native yellow waterlily, which is beneficial.
- 16 Check boat trailers for noxious weeds.** Boats can carry aquatic weed fragments from lake to lake, creating infestations. Wash boats and trailers thoroughly between use at different lakes.
- 17 Don't ever dump aquarium contents, fish or amphibious pets in the lake.** These plants and animals can create serious negative impacts to lake ecology.

## WILDLIFE & HABITAT



- 18 Discourage geese - shrink your lawn.** Goose poop, in excess, can negatively affect water quality. Reduce the wide open spaces they love so much by replacing grass with taller plants.
- 19 Leave fallen trees in the lake and on the shoreline.** If not a threat to safety, they provide food and shelter for native fish, amphibians and birds.
- 20 Don't feed the ducks.** Bread isn't good for ducks. And when they gather in large flocks – to be near a consistent food source – they can transmit diseases. Also, excess goose poop can contribute to water quality problems.
- 21 Leave beaver dams alone.** Or find out how you can legally modify them. Alert authorities if beavers are altering your lake level. Improperly removing dams can cause major flooding damage downstream and beavers will likely return to build again using more trees.
- 22 Put up wood duck boxes.** They can substitute for the nests ducks usually make in large trees, which are disappearing from lake shores.
- 23 Let the birds have some fish.** When your lake is stocked and is suddenly visited by a hundred cormorants, they're just following the food and soon they'll be gone.
- 24 Put up bat boxes.** Bats eat pounds of insects every night – that's serious relief from mosquitoes!
- 25 Love the fact that your lake is not a bathtub or swimming pool.** Abundant and varied native plants are fun to explore and good for the wildlife you share this ecosystem with.

## COMMUNITY ACTIVISM



- 26 Join or form a lake association.** Research local and statewide organizations online at home or the library. Visit other lake groups to see what they do.
- 27 Attend public meetings.** Stay informed about what's happening in your area. Ask questions about how projects and development will impact you and the lake.
- 28 Talk to your neighbors.** Caring and sharing about your lake is something you probably have in common. Take a new neighbor on a lake tour.
- 29 Create a “Welcome Packet” for new neighbors.** Many newcomers to lakeside living would welcome information about how to protect water quality and the environment. Include this flyer!
- 30 Organize a public meeting.** Invite experts to your lake group meetings to discuss topics of interest or attend a public meeting. You'll learn what is happening in your watershed and how it affects you.
- 31 Keep hazardous waste out of the lake.** Organize a neighborhood trip to the Hazardous Wastemobile. Check your car for oil leaks. And don't dump anything down storm drains or ditches.
- 32 Create wildlife corridors.** Work with your neighbors and the community to organize and plan landscaping projects together to create “wildlife corridors” between properties, the lake and forested areas away from the water. This gives critters somewhere to go besides your yard or patio.
- 33 Be a zebra mussel monitor.** Join the Volunteer Zebra Mussel Monitoring Project and be part of the early warning system for these tiny Asian invaders that can cause damage to water structures and native ecosystems.
- 34 Communicate with your elected officials.** Let them know what you love about your lake, what issues residents face and be sure to vote!
- 35 Research the history of your lake.** In a library, local agency or on the Web – from facts and photos to legends and lore – you'll be amazed at what you find.

For more information on any or all of these 50 ways to love your lake, contact the King County Lake Stewardship Program. 206-296-6519. [dnr.metrokc.gov/topics/lakes/](http://dnr.metrokc.gov/topics/lakes/)

Alternate formats available  
206-296-6519 or TTY 711

## MAINTENANCE



- 36 Pick up trash around the lake.** Organize a community, clean up day to remove litter and illegal dumps in the neighborhood that might impact lake water quality.
- 37 Clean up after your pets promptly.** Pet waste can contribute significant fecal contamination to your lake, even if it's just from rain or sprinklers washing over it.
- 38 Maintain your septic system.** Failed septic systems can cause significant water quality problems for lakes. Get regular inspections every three months or three years, depending on the type of system by an experienced professional.
- 39 Clean up your yard.** Old equipment, machinery or debris lying around can leach contaminants into the soil, impacting lake water quality.
- 40 Keep a lid on it.** Something as simple as securing your trashcan lid will prevent litter from accidentally being blown into the lake on windy days.
- 41 Monitor public access points.** Report vandalism, destruction or maintenance needs to the city, county or state agency responsible for the right of way.
- 42 Manage domestic livestock manure.** Get assistance in developing management plans to protect water quality.

## AROUND THE HOUSE



- 43 Use non-toxic dock preservative.** Avoid harming water and the critters in it, while protecting your dock. Research and choose alternative, environmentally-friendly maintenance materials before treating lumber.
- 44 Wash your car at a car wash.** Washing it in your driveway sends harmful car oil and residue right into your lake and yard.
- 45 Install a rain barrel.** Collecting water from your rain gutters is a great source for watering your yard and reduces utility bills.
- 46 Take the canoe or row boat.** Good exercise, and you're quiet and closer to the water, so you might see a river otter up close.
- 47 Don't drive golf balls (or cars!) into the lake.** Golf balls in a lake are trash and can harm fish and other critters.
- 48 Don't shoot fireworks into the lake.** They contain chemicals.
- 49 Go for a quiet, moonlight paddle** in a canoe. You'll see a whole new side of your lake.
- 50 Enjoy the beauty.** It's what makes the other 49 things worth doing!



King County  
Department of  
Natural Resources and Parks  
Water and Land Resources Division