

Ocean Shores Fresh Waterways Corporation Buffer Zone Plant Guide

**A resource providing information on suitable plants that help keep
Ocean Shores Water Ways healthy and vibrant.**



One significant way to help maintain the Ocean Shores fresh waterways is by first retaining as much of your original natural buffer as possible, but then augment with plants suggested in this guide. We've provided a list of native plants that are good buffer zone plant choices.

Most of the information in this guide was provided by **Richard A. Mraz** <rmra461@ecy.wa.gov> from the Washington State Department of Ecology. In my experience, Mr. Richard A. Mraz has proven to be very approachable and eager to answer specific questions. Thank you, Richard Mraz.

Every freshwater shoreline has three zones of consideration. This guide suggests plants for each zone and provides both the common and scientific names including a picture and link to additional information about each plant.

As much as possible, "The Wild Garden" <http://www.nwplants.com/index.html> was used for the web links. The bottom of "The Wild Garden" home page has links to several nurseries. In all cases, the links provide material on planting and care.

The three buffer zones are:

1. **Riparian zone or riparian area:** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Riparian_zone is the interface between land and the water. **Riparian** is also the proper nomenclature for one of the fifteen terrestrial biomes of the earth. Plant habitats and communities alongside river banks, lakes, canals, and ponds are called riparian vegetation, characterized by hydrophilic plants.
2. **Lower Bank Zone:** That portion of the bank subject to seasonal water level changes.
3. **Upper Bank Zone:** The area of your property that is higher and not affected by seasonal water levels.

All plants listed in this guide are native to this area. However, the Ocean Shores Fresh Waterways Corporation cannot promise them to be deer proof. Buffer zone plants help filter excess nutrients and toxins out of the ground water. Many of them also significantly help control bank erosion. Because they

are native, most of these plants should prove to be lower maintenance and may potentially reduce both lawn mowing and yard care time and effort. Because of growing height, some of the plants listed are better suited to be planted adjacent to property boundaries rather than between your house and your water front.

RIPARIAN ZONE - This zone extends about two feet up the bank from the edge of the lake or canal. Fluctuating water levels and the wave action from boats and wind will impact this zone. Plants here must tolerate wet soils for extended periods and have deep root systems to minimize erosion. Low-growing plants are best, so the view from your home or deck is unobstructed. Examples of plant varieties suitable for this zone are:

Lady Fern, (*Athyrium filix femina*).

http://www.nwplants.com/business/catalog/ath_fil.html



(*Scirpus microcarpus*).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scirpus_microcarpus



Sedges: particularly (*Carex obnupta*).

http://www.nwplants.com/business/catalog/car_obn.html



Cattail, (*Typha latifolia*).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typha>



LOWER BANK ZONE - This two to ten-foot zone is adjacent to the riparian zone. The soil here tends to be moist but not wet. Plants for this zone should include shrubs that are tolerant of this hydrology. Species such as:

Red Osier Dogwood, (*Cornus stolonifera*).
(Grows to 18 ft.)

http://www.nwplants.com/business/catalog/cor_sers.html



Hooker's Willow, (*Salix hookeriana*). (Grows to 18 ft.)

http://www.nwplants.com/business/catalog/sal_hoo.html



Oregon Iris (*Iris tenax*).

<http://www.wnps.org/landscaping/herbarium/pages/iris-tenax.html>



Salmonberry, (*Rubus spectabilis*).

http://www.nwplants.com/business/catalog/rub_spe.html



Black Twinberry (*Lonicera involucrata*).
(Grows to 9 ft.)

https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=lain5



Evergreen Huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*)

(Grows to 12 ft.) are good choices. Many have colorful flowers or branches and provide food for wildlife.

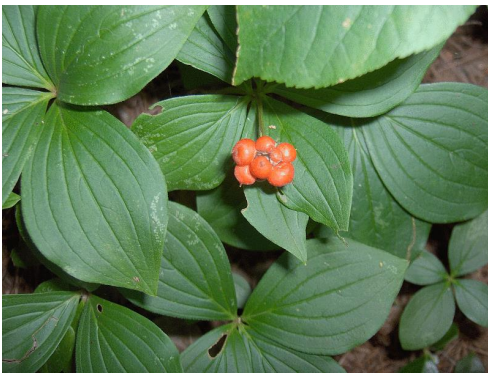


One also might consider adding some ground cover varieties, such as: Lady Fern, Bunchberry or Sword Fern as understory to the taller plantings. These species are generally shade tolerant and easy to maintain.

Lady Fern (see picture above),

Bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornus_canadensis



Sword Fern (*Polystichum munitum*)

<http://www.nwplants.com/business/catalog/polmun.html>



In some areas with more organic soils one might be able to grow the **Native Cranberry (*Oxycoccus oxycoccus*).**

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaccinium_oxycoccus#/media/File:VacciniumOxycoccus.jpg



or **Sweetgale (*Myrica gale*)** in this zone.

<http://nativeplantspnw.com/sweet-gale-myrica-gale/>



UPPER BANK - This zone extends from the end of the lower bank zone toward your home. The landscape here should support shrubs that are more tolerant of drier conditions and offer ornamental benefits (flowers, fruit), such as:

Red Elderberry, (*Sambucus racemose*).

(Grows to 18 ft.)

<http://www.wnps.org/landscaping/herbarium/pages/sambucus-racemosa.html>



Mock Orange, (*Philadelphus lewisii*). *(Grows to 9 ft.)*

<http://www.nwplants.com/business/catalog/philadelphus-lewisii.html>



Evergreen Huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*).

(Grows to 12 ft.)

<http://www.nwplants.com/business/catalog/vaccinium-ovatatum.html>



Red Flowering Currant (*Ribes sanguineum*).

<http://www.nwplants.com/business/catalog/ribes-sanguineum.html>



Ground covers here could include:

Salal, (*Gaultheria shallon*).

<http://www.nwplants.com/business/catalog/gaultheria-shallon.html>



Native Dune Grass (*Leymus mollis*).

<http://vegetation.cnps.org/alliance/423>



May Lily (*Maianthemum dilatatum*).

<https://www.sevenoaksnativenursery.com/native-plants/perennials-and-bulbs/maianthemum-dilatatum/>



Beach Strawberry, (*Fragaria chiloensis*).

<http://www.wnps.org/landscaping/herbarium/pages/fragaria-chiloensis.html>



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Ocean Shores shares many of the same environmental factors with Bellevue, Wa. Bellevue developed a truly comprehensive Critical Areas Handbook that covers: Streams, Wetlands, Shorelines and Geological Hazard Areas. Anyone undertaking a major landscaping project will probably find useful information in their handbook.

https://development.bellevuewa.gov/UserFiles/Servers/Server_4779004/File/pdf/Development%20Services/ca_handbook.pdf

The City of Ashland Or. also developed a useful handbook called the "Stream and Wetland Enhancement Guide". You can view it at:

http://www.ashland.or.us/SIB/files/Stream_Wetland_guide_Aug2015_web.pdf

Washington State also has an excellent guide at:

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/documents/1406022.pdf>

The above resources hopefully will address your buffer zone questions. On behalf of the Ocean shores Fresh Waterways Corp., we hope you find this guide to be informational and useful for your future buffer zone projects.

Thank you for taking the time to review the information presented in this guide.