TREES FOREVER

Working for Water Quality



RUNOFF FROM FARM FIELDS, CITY STREETS, PARKING LOST, AND LAWNS DEGRADES OUR LAKES AND STREAMS AND ERODES OUR SOILS. EVERY YEAR IN IOWA AND ILLINOIS WE LOSE, ON AVERAGE, FIVE TONS OF TOPSOIL PER ACRE. WILDLIFE HABITAT ALSO CONTINUES TO DECLINE AS MORE TREES AND NATIVE PLANTS ARE REMOVED FROM THE LANDSCAPE.

Conservation practices and benefits

Strategically placed buffers and conservation plantings of perennial trees, shrubs, prairie grasses, and flowers are proven to help:

Reduce sediment runoff into streams and other waterways. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), buffers can reduce sediment runoff by up to 75 percent.

Reduce and filter fertilizer and pesticide runoff. The NRCS reports that buffers can remove up to 50 percent or more of nutrients and pesticides from runoff.

Improve soil quality. Permanent root structures and reduced tillage promote microbial activity benefiting soil structure and quality.

Improve fish and wildlife habitat. Native plantings along streams and waterways can provide food, cover, and migration corridors for wildlife.

Provide additional income through agroforestry practices. Growing chestnuts, hazelnuts, aronia berry, pecans, and black walnuts for example.

What Can You Do?

Communities, Farmers, Landowners

Consider installing buffers on your land adjacent to vulnerable waters. The Trees Forever staff can assist in selecting appropriate conservation practices, finding funding resources, and guiding the installation and maintenance of the buffer.

How We Can All Help

- Plant native trees, shrubs, prairie grasses and flowers to intercept rainwater, improve infiltration and create wildlife and pollinator habitat.
- If you must use herbicides or pesticides on your lawn, trees or plants, follow all directions carefully. Consider hand-weeding when possible.
- Only fertilize lawns if a soil test shows it is needed. Follow all directions. Consider building soil health with aeration and compost application.
- Collect rainwater from your roof to use for irrigation later. Plant rain gardens to keep stormwater runoff from reaching city storm sewers.
- Volunteer with your community tree or conservation group. Or start one!