Some plants attractive to bees, songbirds and small mammals

Blueberries (*Vaccinium*)
Huckleberries (*Gaylussacia*)
Hazelnuts (*Corylus*)
Dogwoods (*Cornus*)
Mulberries (*Morus*)
Spicebushes (*Lindera*)
Hawthorns (*Crataegus*)
Serviceberries (*Amelanchier*)
Hollies (*Ilex*)
Aspen (*Populus*)
Gumtrees (*Nyssa*)
Christmas fern (*Polystichum*)
Birches (*Betula*)
Cedars & junipers (*Juniperus*)

Some especially fragrant plants

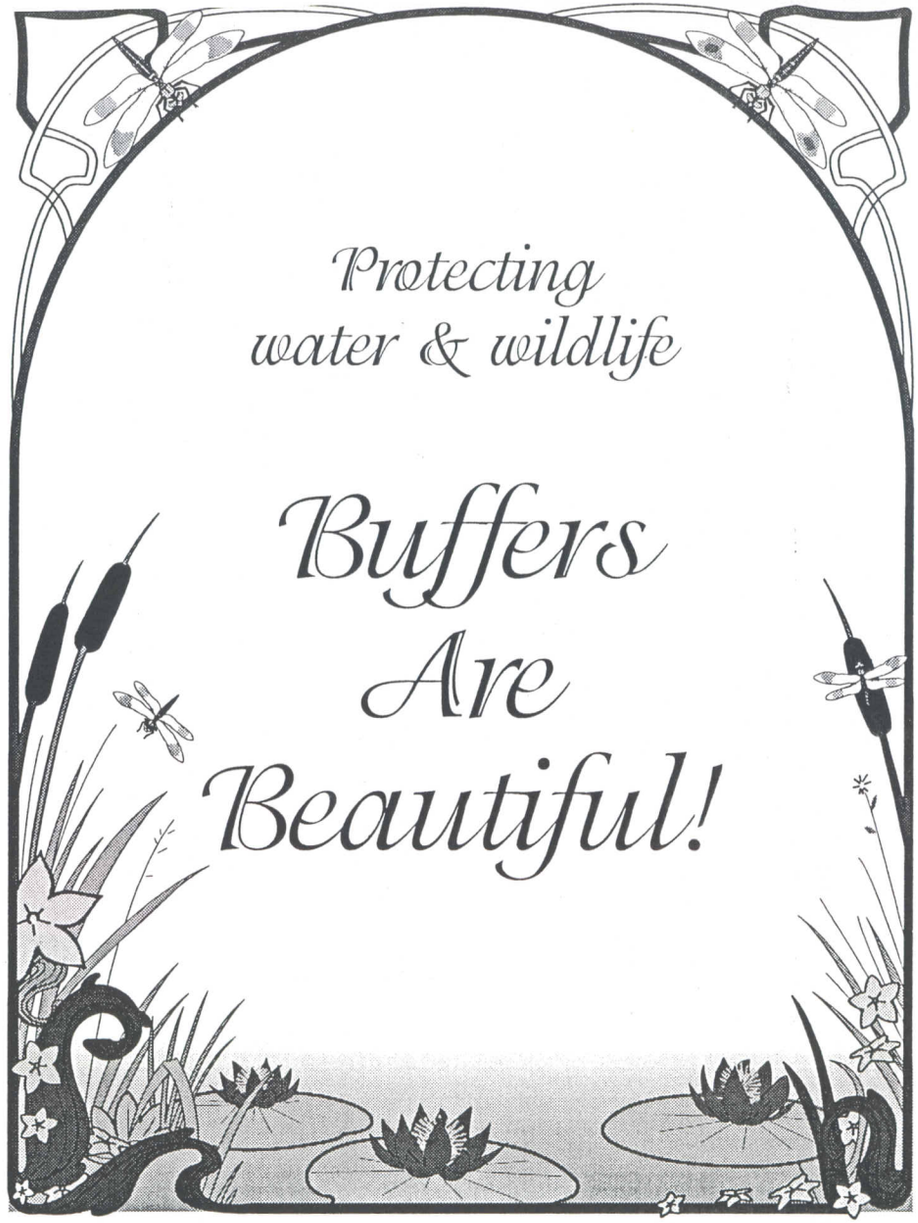
Butterfly bush (*Buddleia*)
Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus*)
Sweet Pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*)
Sweet Bay (*Magnolia glauca*)
Wax Myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*)
Bayberry (*Myrica carolinensis*)
Crabapple (*Pyrus*)
Sassafras (*Sassafras officinale*)
American linden (*Tilia*)
Viburnum (*Viburnum spp.*)
Wild ginger (*Asarum canadensis*)
Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*)
Partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*)
Bee balm (*Monarda spp.*)
Wood sorrel (*Oxalis montana*)
Dwarf or creeping phlox (*Phlox spp.*)
Sweet Violets (*Viola spp.*)
Elders (*Sambucus spp.*)

Natural Resources Commission
525 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA 02181-5992
(617) 431-1019 Ext. 294

JN 9/96

Protecting water & wildlife

Buffers Are Beautiful!



Town of Wellesley
Natural Resources Commission

What is happening to Wellesley's lakes and ponds?

Runoff from Wellesley's lawns carries soil particles laden with phosphorus, nitrogen and pesticides into our brooks and ponds, turning them green with aquatic weeds and algae. The weeds and algae rot, depleting the water of oxygen and causing fish kills. A thick organic ooze builds up, stimulating more plant growth. Soon the sparkling pond turns into a swamp.

All ponds eventually turn into swamps. The process is called eutrophication. In undeveloped areas eutrophication takes hundreds of years. In developed areas it can take as little as ten years.

This "cultural eutrophication" is more than an aesthetic problem. When our ponds fill up, the water has to go somewhere else. That means flood damage to nearby and downstream properties. Preventing and repairing this damage requires tax dollars better spent elsewhere.

Green lawns mean green lakes. What can we do?

The best thing is to replace lawns where possible with low-care shrubbery, meadow wildflowers, and hardy groundcovers. The next best thing is to reduce the area of lawn and the amount and type of fertilizer used. Planting drought-tolerant plants (xeriscaping) to reduce the need for watering will help. And finally, where no natural buffers exist, we can design buffer strips or greenbelts between our lawns and the water, or between our lawns and the street drains, to trap any remaining runoff and hold it on the land.

Take a fresh look at your lawn. Does it end at the street? Then it needs a buffer to stop water from running into the street, down the street drain, and into the nearest brook. Those washes of wasted water mean trouble for our ponds.

A low-water or no-water planting is called a xeriscape ("dry landscape"). They are becoming more and more popular as water becomes scarcer and more expensive.

Does your lawn slope down to open water? If so, is there a band of natural vegetation between the cultivated area and the brook or pond? Then you have a start on what you need. Wide buffers are better than narrow ones, and buffers along brooks have enormous potential as wildlife corridors when you enhance them with native shrubs that provide food and shelter to local wildlife. Would you be happier with more songbirds and less lawn?

Or does your lush lawn sweep right down to the water without a generous buffer between it and the water? In that case, the time to get started is now.

How to create a Buffer or Greenbelt

The goal is to establish a band of unfertilized, unsprayed vegetation between your lawn and the water that meets your aesthetic standards while protecting the brook or pond and promoting a healthier aquatic ecosystem.

The easy way to achieve this goal is to stop cutting your lawn near the water. Let natural wetlands vegetation take over the shoreline. If you enjoy wildlife, give nature lots of room. Wildlife corridors next to water are essential to the survival of our birds and mammals, providing shelter between reservations.

You can improve your wildlife corridor or create a more planned and formal buffer by considering the slope, the soil, and the balance between sun and shade. Are you interested in trees, high or low shrubbery, perennials, groundcovers, or a combination of these? Would you like to attract butterflies or hummingbirds? Drench your garden in perfume? What about a pageant of the seasons, with spring, fall and winter color?

Greenbelts absorb fertilizers, pesticides, sediments and floodwater. They stabilize shorelines and provide wildlife habitat.

The choice of plants is virtually unlimited so long as they are hardy, drought-tolerant, and pest-resistant. Consider North America's native species first. Avoid plants known to be aggressive and hard to control.

If you are new to Wellesley or to Massachusetts, consult the library and one or more of our fine local nurseries. Consider joining the Garden in the Woods or one of Wellesley's six garden clubs. The Natural Resources office (617–431–1019 Ext. 294) and the Department of Public Works' Park & Tree Division (617–235–7600 Ext. 330) can provide further guidance.

A word of caution! If your planting plans call for removing existing turf or for turning a lot of soil at one time, check with the Wetlands Protection Committee before you start. Working on or near streambanks can cause collapse of the bank or erosion into the water, exactly what we are trying to prevent.

Once your greenbelt is established, forget it except for minor maintenance and your own daily pleasure.

You can reduce the pressure on our ponds by following these guidelines. Thank you for helping!