

STREAMSIDE BUFFERS

Trees help create healthier land and cleaner water, naturally!

So, what is a streamside buffer?

A streamside buffer is a deliberate planting of trees and shrubs along any size of waterway to protect it against erosion and pollution. Trees within these buffers act like sponges to slow rainwater runoff, keeping your land intact and protecting your property value.

Cleaner water and healthier land both benefit all Pennsylvanians. Planting a streamside buffer shows your neighbors that you are a good steward of your land and how much you value your community.

What types of trees and shrubs work best?

Effective streamside buffers feature trees and shrubs native to our region. Native plants thrive in our climate, are easier to care for and provide excellent food and habitat for local species of wildlife in water and on land, including trout and pollinators. Many different species, like those listed on the right, can thrive in streamside buffers.

There are many other trees and shrubs that may work for your property and make a great streamside buffer. Your buffer specialist will work with you to plan the perfect streamside buffer that best meets your needs and your land.



FLOWERING TREES/SHRUBS:

Dogwoods
Redbud
Pussy willow
Serviceberry
Blackhaw viburnum



TREES/SHRUBS THAT PRODUCE EDIBLE NUTS/FRUIT:

Persimmon
Pawpaw
Highbush blueberry
Elderberry
American hazelnut



GENERAL TREES/SHRUBS:

Sycamore
Swamp White Oak
Black willow
Ninebark
Arrowwood viburnum

How much space is needed to install a streamside buffer?

To create an effective streamside forest buffer that filters pollution and improves your property, approximately 150–200 trees should be planted on each acre. Trees should be spaced 10 to 15 feet apart and planted in rows to help make caring for the trees easy.

Streamside buffers should be at least 35 feet wide or planted in 2–3 rows going back from the edge of the streambank. The wider the streamside buffer, the better it works to stop erosion, reduce pollution, clean the water, and create privacy on your property. However, any trees along a stream are beneficial!

Each new streamside buffer and the spacing, width and tree species selected will be tailored specifically to your property and your preferences as the landowner.

What type of maintenance is needed to maintain a buffer?

After trees are planted, they need help to thrive and grow. For the first several years, weeds around the trees should be removed or controlled. After trees are planted, they are protected with plastic shelters, which help keep them safe from hungry wildlife. Tree shelters should be straightened after winter, and after storm or flooding events. Your buffer specialist can help you complete a tree care and maintenance plan to ensure your planting continues to be a success.

I'm interested in buffering my stream. What next steps do I take?

We want to help you plant your buffer! We can recommend an approach that is customized for you and your property—and we can help find funding opportunities and support to install your streamside buffer.

Contact our stream buffer experts at dcnr.pa.gov/BufferMyStream, ra-nrstreambuffers@pa.gov, or 717-705-2820 to arrange a visit.

Buffering your stream shows your neighbors and the community that you are a good steward of your land. It has a positive impact on Pennsylvania's natural resources and the Chesapeake Bay watershed—and leaves a legacy for years to come.

THE BENEFITS OF STREAMSIDE BUFFERS



Reduced erosion: Tree roots hold streambanks in place.



Improved habitats: Streamside buffers create better natural conditions for wildlife in the water and on land, including trout and pollinators.



Enriched landscape: Buffers add shade, privacy and help with property value.



Cleaner water: Trees and shrubs filter pollution.

YOUR LAND. YOUR LEGACY. YOUR NATURAL RESOURCES.

Protect them all by planting a streamside buffer.

Learn more at dcnr.pa.gov/BufferMyStream

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