

FACT SHEET: Riparian Buffers and Streamside Care

▶ What is a Riparian Buffer?

Riparian buffers are the vegetated areas adjacent to streams and creeks. These areas generally consist of plants, shrubs, and trees.

▶ Why are Riparian Buffers Important?

Riparian buffers protect waterways by preventing pollutants from reaching them, stabilizing stream banks, reducing floodwater damage, preventing erosion, providing food and habitat for wildlife, and helping keep streams cool during the summer. Riparian buffers are an important tool and go a long way toward improving the quality of our creeks, streams, rivers, and lakes.

▶ How Do Riparian Buffers Help the Environment?

Riparian buffers play a key role in improving both stormwater quantity and quality. Riparian buffers:

- Provide areas where stormwater can soak into the ground and recharge groundwater.
- Slow floodwaters, which protect stream banks and downstream properties.
- Trap sediment, debris, and other pollutants from paved areas, roadways, agricultural fields, and lawns, thereby preventing the contaminants from entering our waterways.
- Prevent nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus from entering streams.

In addition to improving stormwater, riparian buffers also provide other environmental benefits, such as:

- Providing shade that helps keep streams cool, which is important for fish and other wildlife.
- Providing valuable habitat (food and shelter) for wildlife such as deer, rabbits, eagles, and songbirds.

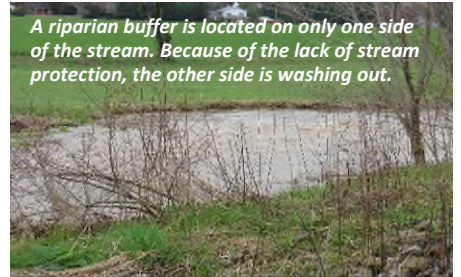
▶ What Can You Do?

Creating and maintaining riparian buffers is important for the health of our waterways. Below are ways you can help improve stream banks using riparian buffers:

- If you own your property, plant a riparian buffer along the stream bank. Be sure to use only native plants and seek any municipal/regulatory approvals as needed.
- Never dump trash, debris, yard waste, or other items within a riparian buffer.
- Check with your municipality or watershed group to volunteer for a riparian buffer planting project.



A riparian buffer is located on only one side of the stream. Because of the lack of stream protection, the other side is washing out.



PENNSYLVANIA NATIVE PLANTS YOU CAN USE

- ▶ Ferns: Cinnamon Fern, Royal Fern, Sensitive Fern
- ▶ Flowering perennials: Blue Lobelia, Black-eyed Susan, Purple Coneflower, New England Aster
- ▶ Grasses: Sedge, Switch Grass, Virginia Wild Rye
- ▶ Shrubs: Arrowwood, Silky Dogwood, Spice Bush, Winterberry Holly
- ▶ Trees: American Beech, Pagoda Dogwood, Red Maple, Green Ash, American Sycamore

FOR INFORMATION AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Visit [Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences](#) for more information on the benefits of riparian buffers, including planning, planting, and maintaining your riparian buffer.



Purple Coneflower

WE CAN HELP!

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