

# Guidelines for Lake Huron Bluff Vegetation

## Why do bluffs need a well-vegetated slope?

- Enhances slope stability by anchoring soil, intercepting rain, and slowing runoff,
- Maintains views and improve aesthetics, and
- Provides habitat for songbirds and other wildlife.

Areas with little or no existing vegetation may be too steep to support plants and/or indicate an area of active erosion. Vegetation will not stabilize very steep or actively eroding slopes.

## Planting Suggestions for Bluff Restoration: Groundcovers

### Quick Cover or Nurse Crop:

Annual Ryegrass, Oats and other spring grain.

**Grasses:** Perennial Rye, Orchard Grass, Prairie Dropseed, Slender Wheat Grass, Little Bluestem, Switch Grass, Big Bluestem.

**Wildflowers:** Birdsfoot Trefoil, Low White Clover Varieties (Dutch or Huai), Brown-Eyed Susan, Smooth Aster, Heath Aster, Early Goldenrod, Purple Coneflower, Perennial Sunflower.

Biodegradable mats or mesh covers may enhance seed establishment on steep slopes.



*Smooth Aster and Goldenrod.*



*Woolly Willow. Source: Walter Muma.*

## Planting Suggestions for Bluff Restoration: Trees and Shrubs

Woody roots enhance slope stability more than groundcover alone. Shrubs or small trees are preferred to large trees on steep slopes.

### **Shrubs for Dry Slopes:**

Red Osier Dogwood, Grey Dogwood, Ninebark, Sumac, Wild Roses (Carolina rose, Smooth Rose), Chokecherry, Junipers.

### **Shrubs for Wet Slopes and Seeps:**

Shrub willows including Sandbar Willow, Pussy Willow, Woolly Willow, Silky Dogwood.

**Trees:** White Cedar, Eastern Red Cedar, Ironwood, White Birch, Honey Locust.

## Why maintain existing natural cover?

- Retains root networks and canopy cover that enhance slope stability,
- Provides aesthetically pleasing natural vistas, and
- Supports rare coastal species and complements protected areas such as Pinery Provincial Park.

## Maintaining Views and Vistas

Shrubs and trees can be professionally pruned to maintain views and vistas. Cedar and most deciduous trees and shrubs can withstand ongoing trimming. As a general rule:

- Do not cut more than 1/3 of the live foliage in a year.
- Frequent (annual) trimming or hedging is better than dramatic pruning

**Large Trees:** Occasionally a large tree on the shore bluff will die, and that heavy load may further weaken a slope that already has impaired stability. If this happens:

- **It is IMPORTANT to contact your local municipality to ensure you are in compliance with local bylaws. A Certified Arborist or Forestry Professional should assess trees and supervise tree trimming or removal.**
- Leave stump and roots system intact and soils undisturbed during removals.
- Remove limbs and debris from the slope.



Wild Grapevine. Source: OMAFRA

### Grapevine

Grapevine is natural but becomes problematic when it overtops trees and shrubs that help to hold the bluff soils. Vines originating from a single root system can grow 15 m (50 ft) long.

To manage grapevine, cut vines at their base near the root. *Do not* pull vines from the trees and shrubs they cover as this may cause more damage. Vines re-sprout vigorously making repeated cutting necessary. Cutting just below the soil surface may inhibit re-sprouting.

### Cedar Groves

White Cedar is natural on the lake bluff mixed with other trees or forming pure stands.

A wide-spreading fibrous root system with root grafts to adjacent trees make White Cedar very effective at holding soils.

Bare ground under cedar is normal due to shading. It is not a concern due to the interconnecting web of cedar roots.



Cedars along shoreline. Source: Dan Holm Photography

Know your Lake Huron shoreline beach system. If you live along a dune shoreline, please refer to 'Guidelines for Lake Huron Dune Vegetation.'