

## BUFFER BENEFITS

*Streamside plants protect your property by slowing runoff and allowing it to soak into the ground, recharging wells and reducing flooding. Roots of plants in the buffer help hold the soil and control erosion. Trees shade the stream to keep it cool for aquatic life and provide habitat for birds and other wildlife. Buffer plants can provide seasonal blooms and autumn color to beautify your yard while providing protection. Buffer zones can also add to the value of your property.*



*Stream with banks protected by a forested riparian cover. Just beautiful.*

Thank you for your interest in stream buffer areas. For more information about stream buffers and stream bank stabilization, please contact the Stormwater Division at 636-797-6228.



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# Backyard Buffers

*... the natural area that protects your backyard stream and your backyard.*



*Permanent vegetation along the backyard stream bank provides a "living filter" for both storm water runoff and ground water, while providing your home landscape with erosion control, privacy, and the pleasure of watching wildlife.*

# The Facts About Streamside Buffers

## Why the concern?

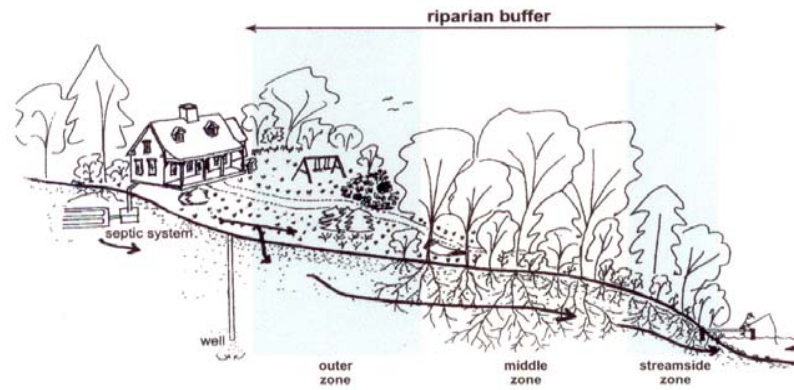
Residential neighborhoods can be a major source of water pollution. Water flowing over roads, lawns, and yards picks up sediments, lawn fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, heavy metals, and other pollutants that people don't want in their waterways. By disturbing or removing the forested buffer next to your back yard creek, you are removing the barrier that protects water from pollutants and: . . .

**Erosion:** cutting stream bank vegetation destabilizes the shoreline and can lead to loss of land and lawn damage during flooding and by surface water (stormwater) runoff.

**Increased Flooding:** Land development increases runoff from impervious surfaces like roofs, roads, sidewalks, and parking lots. Rainwater can run off lawns twice as fast as from forests causing flooding during heavy rains.

**Loss of Habitat:** The forested stream bank is necessary for birds and other wildlife. Woody debris from overhanging vegetation provides food and shelter for aquatic life in the stream.

**Floodplain:** Every stream has a floodplain as a part of the stream's corridor. Naturally vegetated areas along the stream banks allow flood waters a right-of-way without destroying property.



## A Three Zone Buffer System

The most effective backyard buffer has three zones:

**Streamside:** from the water to the top of the bank. Protects the bank and offers habitat. The best buffer has mature forest but large shrubs may be a better choice. Let it grow and let it go for the best protection.

**Middle Zone:** from the top of the bank inland. Protects stream water quality and offers habitat. Varies in width depending on size of stream and the slope and use of the nearby land. The best buffer has trees, shrubs, and perennial ground plants.

**Outer Zone:** the yard, garden, or woods between your home and the rest of the buffer. Traps sediment; play areas, gardens, compost piles, and other common residential activities are suitable here.

- ◆ Your buffer does the best job of filtering runoff when the water spreads out and does not flow straight to the stream in a channel. Use stones or landscape timbers to divert runoff into flatter areas where it can soak in.
- ◆ Protect your property and the stream by not building in the stream's floodplain. Streamside land is a high risk area for development even above flood elevation, since a stream channel may move.
- ◆ Avoid planting a lawn to the water's edge. This is the worst mistake homeowners make. This puts your property at risk for erosion and delivers lawn chemicals directly to the stream—and ruins the stream's aquatic life.
- ◆ A lawn nearer your house can work as part of your riparian buffer by soaking up runoff and catching sediment from driveways and bare ground.

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