



LAKESCAPES

The Art of Merging Nature & Design

TEXT AND
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Whatscapes? “Lakescapes.” Yeah, you know; indiginous, herbaceous and woody understory?... Dampening canopy?... Natural duff?... OK, how about phosphorous export?... Non-point source pollution?... Sediment migration?... Well, what about those BMP’s? Phase II? Mitigation?... Soil porosity?... Don’t be confused or deterred by a few new words or regulations, it’s really very simple, but because landscapes in ecosensitive areas such as lakesides and watersheds are changing, those of us working in these areas, even in small ways, need to stay current on the changing regulations and language and how they may pertain to our landscaping projects.

So, let’s talk about “Lakescapes.” I define it as the art and the craft of seamlessly merging naturally existing elements of a landscape with those of introduced elements. Everywhere we look, we see the symmetry of nature, its beauty and diversity, the elegance of its elements. Whether by happenstance or cosmic design, Nature is the consummate and supreme gardener, diligently creating and recreating herself throughout the seasons.



The patio is the most obviously “introduced” element to the property (shown beforehand at immediate and far right). The added vegetation and stonework seem to have been there waiting for the patio to complete it. In fact, none of the elements above existed before it was “lakescaped.”

Our own desire to co-create with Nature harkens from the need to bring order and usefulness to our space, and so we must consider with great regard the consequences of our participation and how it impacts those most fundamental elements of all: our land, our air, and our water, for these are the elements, wild and natural, from which we draw our health and mirth.

How do we do this? “Triology,” of course. Is that even a real word? Well, if it isn’t, let’s just make it one. After all, lake science, ecomanagement, and environmental health and habitat—human and animal alike—are still emerging and often greatly debated topics. So as soon as someone devises a- new idea or a new way of doing something in a new field of study... Bang! We’ve got a new word. “Triology” will be our new word, and by using this threefold methodology we can help to steer and grow a vital new science

from right here in our own backyards. A three-tier approach to landscaping in and around ecosensitive areas; in this case, our Maine lakes.

So, what is it? And how can I help? I’m glad you asked. Keep in mind that we’re thinking globally here for the moment, or at least Mainely, about how our little piece of the proverbial pie is connected to the big picture. We first need to consider what is going to be good for our lakes and the environment. Secondly, what is going to be good for us and our families and how we will use and enjoy our little piece of the pie. And thirdly, what is going to be good with regard to the regulation of our towns and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP), who is the enforcing agent of these laws that protect such sensitive areas. Equally important to remember is that we are the people who are creating the



see a difference tomorrow.

Now, whether you're a landscaper by trade or just a weekend warrior with a shovel, you'll need to know a little bit about some of the ways that you can do the right thing, and what some of the buzz words are that you may encounter along the way, especially if you're talking about soil disturbance.

Be sure that you know of any restrictions in the areas you want to landscape.



If you are going to be working in a buffer or protected area ask the local code enforcement officer what your setback requirements are and whether or not you will need a permit. Will you be planting vegetation only, or will you be doing construction; such as steps, walls, patios or decks as part of your plans? Just a quick note here, if you haven't built your house or camp yet, be sure to leave enough of a setback for such structures because you may not be able to add these

things to the lakeside of your house later if you haven't left enough space now.

regulations and laws so it behooves us to be informed participants. It is also important to note that in spite of any difficulties you, or someone you know, may have had in getting approval or permits for work to be done in ecosensitive areas, these regulatory agencies and their agents are really on our side and are diligently, and often thankfully, working for the greater good of our lakes and watersheds.

So, there it is, Triology. What's good for the lake, what's good for us, and what we are allowed to do within the guidelines of local, state and federal regulations. Indisputably, there is a great responsibility and sometimes cost associated with "doing the right thing" when developing and enhancing these natural areas, but understand that if we choose to cheat a little here and a little there because we may not see the difference it makes today, our children and our children's children will

things to the lakeside of your house later if you haven't left enough space now.

Are you considering cutting trees or clearing brush? You should know that a *dampening canopy* (tree leaves that break up and soften rain drops) and the *indigenous herbaceous wood understory* (everything that grows under them) are protected as part of your natural buffer with the shoreland zone. You can learn what is allowable for clearing and cutting by reviewing a current copy of your local shoreland Zoning Ordinance handbook, which is available at your local town office. The current state regulations are available from the Maine DEP.

To simplify, let's just say that a good "Lakescape" design creates beautification through conservation, and that we don't want to eradicate or diminish the natural beauty or habitat of the site in the process

of creating useful, fun and beautiful spaces for ourselves. In addition, by not removing the *natural duff* (pine needles, leaves and small twigs) and by using appropriate *BMPs* (best management practices) we can prevent *phosphorous export* (naturally occurring fertilizer runoff) to the lakes. Duff also softens rain drops and helps to *mitigate* (slow down) both *sediment migration* (soil loss) and *non-point source pollutants* (organic and non-organic pollution agents of unknown site origin). Mitigation allows for better *soil porosity* (air pockets in the soil), thus making it easier for plants to readily absorb the water and its contaminants, such as phosphorous, before it can enter the lake and begin the cycle of decline.

You should also be aware that excessive construction and heavy equipment, grading and soil disturbance, including heavy foot traffic, can create compacted soils and flatten ground that cannot properly absorb, maintain or divert water. As a result, plants will struggle to survive and our "Lakescape" will lack interest and natural continuity with its surroundings. As we continue to develop shoreline properties we will need to become *Phase II* (new regulations) compliant and exercise even greater restraint in the battle for a better, cleaner and healthier environment and against our own insatiable desires to create and recreate what was once before so uniquely pristine.

Didn't I tell you it was very simple?!"

Next we'll want to discuss the elements of design using existing vegetation, sunlight, wind, topography and natural vistas. Then, choosing the right plants and why (natives versus cultivars or a mixture). Other considerations include the use of stone, structure, color and form, accessibility and maintenance and wildlife and habitat (the good and the bad). All of these are fun and exciting topics for those of us who like to play in the dirt, but remember, we're just digging up somebody else's ground, so let's not make a mess of things while we're doing it. By understanding the part we play in the "big picture" and the importance of the basics and how natural things work, we can certainly take pride in calling ourselves co-creator and keepers of Mother Nature's good earth.

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