



BACKYARD CONSERVATION

It'll grow on you.

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FILTER STRIPS

What are Filter Strips?

Filter strips are areas of permanent vegetation used to intercept sediment, nutrients, and contaminants moving from contaminated areas (such as parking lots or lawns) to bodies of water. They may border small streams and ponds, large lakes and rivers, or wetlands.



Photo courtesy of USDA

Cool-Season Species

- Timothy
- Redtop
- Orchardgrass
- Virginia Wildrye
- Canada Wildrye
- White Dutch Clover
- Ladino Clover

Warm-Season Species

- Big Blue Stem
- Indiangrass
- Fowl Manna Grass
- Little Blue Stem
- Side Oats Gramma
- New England Aster
- Purple Coneflower
- Black Eyed Susan

(These are not complete lists.)

Benefits

- Absorbs nutrient runoff, leading to decreased algae growth and clearer water.
- Reduces erosion, promoting better water quality and bank stabilization.
- Increases wildlife habitat.
- Reduces maintenance and mowing costs.

Operation and Maintenance

Filter strips should be mowed just enough to encourage dense vegetative growth. However, avoid mowing before August 1st when wildlife are nesting on the ground. Watch for undesirable plant species and be sure to remove them as soon as possible, before they become a problem. Check for and repair gullies and sediment accumulation after a heavy storm to ensure continued functionality of your filter strip.

How to Form a Filter Strip

- Before beginning any project, check homeowner association covenants, as well as local and county ordinances. Do not work in a drainage, utility, or other easement without the proper permits.
- The slope of the bank will determine how wide your filter strip should be. The steeper the slope, the wider the strip should be to effectively filter and absorb runoff. The area should be at least 20-40 feet wide if possible.
- The simplest way to form a filter strip in an area with existing vegetation is to simply stop mowing, fertilizing, or applying pesticides. Some control of pests may be necessary.
- To increase wildlife habitat and aesthetics, consider planting new plant species in the filter strip area. You can plant a single grass species or a combination of grasses and wildflowers.
 - ◇ Fourteen (14) days prior to planting, kill all existing vegetation with an herbicide safe for use around water.
 - ◇ Cool season plant species actively grow in the spring and fall and should be planted between March 1st and May 15th or August 1st and September 15th. Warm season species actively grow in the summer and should be planted between April 1st and June 15th.
 - ◇ Once existing vegetation is killed, there are different ways to plant the seed. If the area is small, till it to a depth of 3 inches and hand-broadcast the seed. The area should then be lightly firmed with a roller and covered with an erosion control blanket. If the area is larger, seed may be installed with a no-till drill.

For more information or for guidance specific to your site, contact your local county Soil and Water Conservation District.