Littoral Zones
What are they and what do they do?

The shallow down-sloping shelf of a lake or pond is commonly referred to as the lake’s “littoral zone”. The zone is an area where the water meets the land. Plants here support wildlife such as wading birds, turtles and crabs.

Littoral Zones are crucial components of healthy ecosystems, hence are protected by law. A primary function of a planted littoral zone is to absorb pollutants from water that ultimately drain into our canals and rivers, particularly water generated from storms. Littoral zone vegetation also prevents shoreline erosion. Since 1985, Martin County has required that a percentage of each lake, pond, or stormwater retention pond be established as a littoral zone.

Well functioning littoral areas are aesthetically pleasing, add habitat for wildlife and increase property values.

Turtles spend hours basking in the sun.
Healthy lakes are good lakes

A balanced, healthy lake will easily support healthy plants and wildlife. A balanced lake will require little maintenance and few (if any) chemicals. Not only will the lake’s required littoral zone be aesthetically pleasing but its improved water quality will help reduce foul odors and excessive mosquitoes.

The information in this brochure will help guide the property owner in fulfilling the obligation to plant a successful littoral zone.

To create an aesthetically pleasing zone, the hearty plants listed in the diagram to the right are suggested. More detailed information is available at your local public library or from the following organizations, to name a few:

- IFAS, Center for Aquatic Plants, Circular 912 Aquascaping
- Association of Native Plant Nurseries
- Native Plant Society of Martin County

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### Examples of Marsh and Littoral Shelf Plantings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upland</th>
<th>Transitional</th>
<th>Shallow</th>
<th>Mid</th>
<th>Deep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above +1.5’</td>
<td>+1.5’ to +0.5’</td>
<td>+0.5’ to -0.5’</td>
<td>-0.5’ to -3.0’</td>
<td>-3.0’ to -5.0’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Red Maple &lt;br&gt; Acer rubrum</td>
<td>- Buttonbush &lt;br&gt; Cephalanthus occidentalis</td>
<td>- Blue Flag Iris &lt;br&gt; Iris virginica</td>
<td>- Arrowhead &lt;br&gt; Sagittaria lancifolia</td>
<td>- Soft-stem Bulrush &lt;br&gt; Scirpus validus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bald Cypress &lt;br&gt; Taxodium distichum</td>
<td>- Sand Cordgrass &lt;br&gt; Spartina bakeri</td>
<td>- Golden Canna **&lt;br&gt; Canna flaccida</td>
<td>- Pickerelweed &lt;br&gt; Pontederia cordata</td>
<td>- Fragrant White Lily &lt;br&gt; Nymphaea odorata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Swamp Bay &lt;br&gt; Persea palustris</td>
<td>- St. John’s Wort ** &lt;br&gt; Hypericum spp.</td>
<td>- Soft Rush ** &lt;br&gt; Juncus effusus</td>
<td>- Soft-stem Bulrush &lt;br&gt; Scirpus validus</td>
<td>- Spatterdock &lt;br&gt; Nuphar luteum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sweet Gum &lt;br&gt; Liquidambar styraciflua</td>
<td>- Sawgrass **&lt;br&gt; Cladium jamaicense</td>
<td>- Spikerush ** &lt;br&gt; Eleocharis cellulosa</td>
<td>- Tapegrass &lt;br&gt; Vallisneria americana</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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* Can grow in permanent water
** Endures flooding

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Butterfly feeding on Buttonbush flower

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Gallinule
Limpkin
Dragonfly

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