



Start Enjoying the Benefits of Native Trees!

By Jake Janski, Mille Lacs County SWCD District 3
For the Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Management Group

The Mille Lacs Lake watershed is a historically forested region. Over time, forests across our landscape have been lost or fragmented. Many of our neighbors counter these losses by adding trees back onto their landscapes, yards, farms, and woodlands. Planting trees has a wide array of benefits and is an important investment in our future.



The Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) around the Mille Lacs watershed provide annual sales of affordable trees, shrubs, and other native plants to local residents. With spring approaching, the 2021 SWCD annual tree sales in Mille Lacs, Crow Wing, and Aitkin Counties are in full swing.

If you've considered adding trees to your own property, or tried to convince your neighbors to do so, here are some benefits of native trees that may inspire action:

ADAPTED TO LOCAL CONDITIONS: There are countless varieties of trees available, but native trees provide the widest range of benefits to our community. They can adapt to our broad range of soil types and withstand our cold winters. Trees sold by the SWCDs are carefully selected for the Mille Lacs Lake watershed and are native to Minnesota.

INCREASED RESILIENCY: Adding a variety of trees and shrubs to the landscape can replicate the historic diversity of the forests in the watershed and allows for the highest rate of success. Planting an assortment of trees can help deter pests and disease, like emerald ash borer, larch beetles, and oak wilt.

IMPROVED HABITAT: Many trees are an essential food source for numerous birds and mammals. The fruits, cones, nuts, and seeds they produce are used year-round to sustain wildlife.

Beyond that, trees are also a vital food source for pollinators. Many trees, like basswood, maples, aspens, and willow, produce tiny flowers early in the spring. They are an excellent early food source that bees and other beneficial insects need.

SUPPORT HEALTHY WATERS AND SOILS: Trees reduce many negative environmental impacts simply by their presence. Actively growing trees reduce flooding by absorbing immense quantities of water, up to 100 gallons per day. They can absorb excess fertilizer and nutrients, keeping them out of lakes, rivers, and ground water systems. Trees also have extensive root systems trees that stabilize soils to prevent erosion and sedimentation caused by water or wind.

And there are so many more great reasons to plant trees: shade; timber products; nesting sites; filtering the air; supporting a tree house (or deer stand!); and the list goes on. Every single tree improves the overall health of our watershed.

Contact your local SWCD for more information on native trees, shrubs, and plants, or to become a part of the watershed-wide replanting effort!

Mille Lacs SWCD: millelacsswcd.org - (320) 983-2160

Crow Wing SWCD: cswswcd.org - (218) 828-6197

Aitkin SWCD: aitkincountyswcd.wordpress.com - (218) 927-7284



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Visit MilleLacsWatershed.org to learn more about supporting a healthy lake environment