Guidelines for Lake Huron Bluff Vegetation

Why do bluffs need a well-vegetated slope?

- Enhances slope stability by anchoring soil, intercepting rain, and slowing runoff,
- Maintains views and improve aesthetics, and
- Provides habitat for songbirds and other wildlife.

Areas with little or no existing vegetation may be too steep to support plants and/or indicate an area of active erosion. Vegetation will not stabilize very steep or actively eroding slopes.

Planting Suggestions for Bluff Restoration: Groundcovers

Quick Cover or Nurse Crop:

Annual Ryegrass, Oats and other spring grain.

Grasses: Perennial Rye, Orchard Grass, Prairie Dropseed, Slender Wheat Grass, Little Bluestem, Switch Grass, Big Bluestem.

Wildflowers: Birdsfoot Trefoil, Low White Clover Varieties (Dutch or Huai), Brown-Eyed Susan, Smooth Aster, Heath Aster, Early Goldenrod, Purple Coneflower, Perennial Sunflower.

Biodegradable mats or mesh covers may enhance seed establishment on steep slopes.

Smooth Aster and Goldenrod.

Woolly Willow. Source: Walter Muma.

Planting Suggestions for Bluff Restoration: Trees and Shrubs

Woody roots enhance slope stability more than groundcover alone. Shrubs or small trees are preferred to large trees on steep slopes.

Shrubs for Dry Slopes:

Red Osier Dogwood, Grey Dogwood, Ninebark, Sumac, Wild Roses (Carolina rose, Smooth Rose), Chokecherry, Junipers.

Shrubs for Wet Slopes and Seeps:

Shrub willows including Sandbar Willow, Pussy Willow, Woolly Willow, Silky Dogwood.

Trees: White Cedar, Eastern Red Cedar, Ironwood, White Birch, Honey Locust.

Why maintain existing natural cover?

- Retains root networks and canopy cover that enhance slope stability,
- Provides aesthetically pleasing natural vistas, and
- Supports rare coastal species and complements protected areas such as Pinery Provincial Park.

Maintaining Views and Vistas

Shrubs and trees can be professionally pruned to maintain views and vistas. Cedar and most deciduous trees and shrubs can withstand ongoing trimming. As a general rule:

- Do not cut more than 1/3 of the live foliage in a year.
- Frequent (annual) trimming or hedging is better than dramatic pruning

Large Trees: Occasionally a large tree on the shore bluff will die, and that heavy load may further weaken a slope that already has impaired stability. If this happens:

- **It is IMPORTANT to contact your local municipality to ensure you are in compliance with local bylaws. A Certified Arborist or Forestry Professional should assess trees and supervise tree trimming or removal.**
- Leave stump and roots system intact and soils undisturbed during removals.
- Remove limbs and debris from the slope.

Wild Grapevine. Source: OMAFRA

Grapevine

Grapevine is natural but becomes problematic when it overtops trees and shrubs that help to hold the bluff soils. Vines originating from a single root system can grow 15 m (50 ft) long.

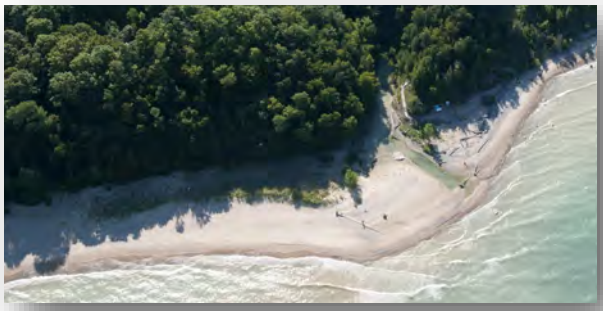
To manage grapevine, cut vines at their base near the root. *Do not* pull vines from the trees and shrubs they cover as this may cause more damage. Vines re-sprout vigorously making repeated cutting necessary. Cutting just below the soil surface may inhibit re-sprouting.

Cedar Groves

White Cedar is natural on the lake bluff mixed with other trees or forming pure stands.

A wide-spreading fibrous root system with root grafts to adjacent trees make White Cedar very effective at holding soils.

Bare ground under cedar is normal due to shading. It is not a concern due to the interconnecting web of cedar roots.



Cedars along shoreline. Source: Dan Holm Photography

Know your Lake Huron shoreline beach system. If you live along a dune shoreline, please refer to 'Guidelines for Lake Huron Dune Vegetation.'

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For more information or to arrange a site visit and consultation, contact:
Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority
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