

Guidelines for Lake Huron Dune Vegetation

Dunes are Important

- Although dunes comprise only 2-3% of Lake Huron's shoreline, these beaches see the most use.
- Coastal plants provide erosion protection of shoreline properties in a dynamic beach system. Leaving this beach vegetation in a natural state provides more protection.
- Dune ecosystems provide nesting habitat for species at risk (such as the Piping Plover), as well as feeding grounds for other shore birds.
- Dune grass, also known as Marram Grass (*Ammophila breviligulata*), is essential for holding sand and building coastal dunes. A deep-spreading root system holds dunes in place as it captures wind-blown sand. **It will only grow in beach sand**, and cannot survive in other soil types.



Cylindrical Blazing Star.



Big Bluestem. Source: Texas A & M University



Butterfly Milkweed.

Suggested Plants for Coastal Sand Dunes

Grasses: Marram Grass, Sand Reedgrass, Switch Grass, Little Bluestem, Indian Grass, and Big Bluestem.

Wildflowers: Cylindrical Blazing Star, Rough Blazing Star, Butterfly Milkweed, Brown-Eyed Susan, Bearberry, Starr Flowered Solomon's Seal

Shrubs and Trees: Sand Cherry, Choke Cherry, Juniper, Buffaloberry, Ninebark, Red Cedar, White Cedar, Red Pine, Cottonwood Poplar, Balsam Poplar, Black Oak, Chinquapin Oak, Honey Locust.

Sources of Plant Material

Seeds and Plants: Several Ontario seed suppliers and local garden centres carry suitable ground cover, including wildflower and grass seed mixes.

Shrubs and Trees: Seedlings can be ordered from Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority for spring planting. Larger sized potted trees and shrubs are available at local nurseries and garden centres.



Dune grass along the Lake Huron shoreline

Groundcovers to Avoid

Crown Vetch: The trailing stems can hide rill and gully erosion occurring underneath the vetch canopy which shades out other plants that are better for improving slope stability.



Crown Vetch. Source: Minnesota Wildflowers



Chinquapin Oak. Source: Arbor Day Foundation

When to Plant

Spring planting is preferred because it enables plants to establish prior to the harsh winter conditions along the lake bluff.

Exception: *Dune grass is best planted in late fall*

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