

The **CHAMPLAIN VALLEY** —Where we Live—

The Champlain Valley was historically a naturally forested landscape. Now the forests have been “fragmented” into small patches of the unique clayplain and transition hardwood forests. Without a concerted effort to support nature conservation and maintain and enhance natural habitats, species and even natural communities may disappear from the Champlain Valley. Areas along the flanks and foothills of the Green Mountains have been largely reforested after widespread deforestation in the nineteenth century, but nature conservation principles discussed in this brochure are appropriate in both mountain and valley.

For Further

References:

American Plants for American Gardens by Edith Roberts and Elsa Rehman, University of Georgia Press 1996

Native Trees, Shrubs and Vines for Urban and Rural America by Gary Hightshoe, John Wiley & Sons Inc. 1988

Reading the Forested Landscape: A Natural History of New England by Tom Wessels, The Country man Press 1997

Internet:

Gardening with native plants: www.newfs.org

Wetland plant and info source: www.newp.com

Native plant info: www.nps.gov/plants/

Champlain Valley Natural History:

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Conserving Land for our Community's Future

Developing a Landscape Plan

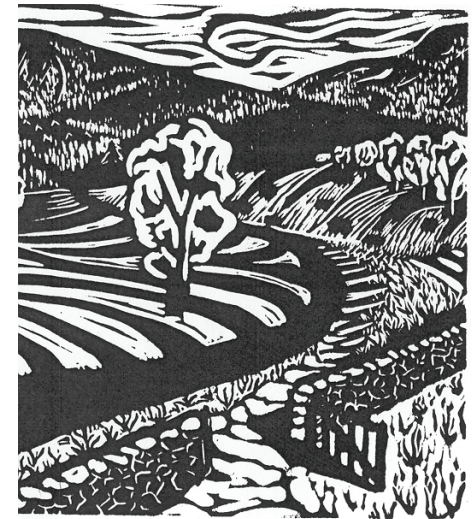
How to improve property for 5 acres or 205 acres—similar principles apply. Here are ways to start:

- ◆ Learn local native species of plants
- ◆ Attend naturalist hikes in the area
- ◆ Identify groups of plants that you like
- ◆ Map out existing vegetation and house location using a survey or tax map
- ◆ Evaluate driveway access to reduce erosion from runoff and melting snowbanks, and to provide safe egress
- ◆ Identify soil differences, wet or low-lying rain collection areas, and established viewshed areas to include on your map
- ◆ Consider creating “rain gardens,” taking advantage of wet areas to support a broad range of plants and salamanders
- ◆ Draw perimeters for areas used for entertaining and recreation purposes
- ◆ Enclose areas for privacy and leave view sheds open
- ◆ Designate succession areas to connect forest patches and establish areas for seasonal mowing or burning
- ◆ Apply nature conservation strategies to your landscape plan

“Ecological studies have shown that forest patch size, clustering of forest patches, maintaining hedgerows between patches, and creation of buffers or ‘softer edges’ are all important for the conservation of native species.”

Ecologist, Marc Lapin

Landscaping with Nature



Conservation Stewardship for Homes and Communities

Property enhancement and maintenance practices for individual landowners to support native species and natural communities

Succession Gardens

Succession occurs when tilled fields, lawn or pasture are left to allow native species growth from the surrounding area. Shrubs succeed the grass species, then trees join and succeed the shrubs. Succession gardening is often overlooked when deciding how to care for a part of a property, yet it offers beauty, surprises and valuable habitat.

- Take a picture of the first year field or lawn
- Identify first year growth of shrubs and trees
- Eliminate or control non-native species
- Encourage fruiting bushes and trees
- Supplement successional trees to create grove areas with transplanted seedlings from nearby crowded forest floor areas

Rain Gardens

Rain gardens take advantage of natural drainage on a site and support an expanded palette of plants for your home landscape. Benefits include reduction of summer watering in garden areas and reduction of runoff into waterways.

- Locate naturally wetter areas in the spring
- Establish boundaries of rain garden at least 8 feet from house
- Channel runoff from drive and gutters to area
- Choose or allow native plants to grow; ferns or native dogwood species are successful.



*Cultivated Field
Succession*



*Pasture Land
Succession*

Recommended Nature Conservation Strategies

- **Keep forest areas forested** – Originally nearly 100% forested, the Champlain Valley is now just 30% forested, and only 15% forested in towns bordering Lake Champlain.
- **Maintain large blocks of forest** – The great majority of species native to Vermont have been living and evolving in forested landscapes for over 10,000 years. Clusters of small and medium sized woods are also valuable.
- **Allow “old fields” to grow** - Old field succession is beautiful and functional, provides habitat for grass- and shrub-land nesting animals, and, if left to grow, will be the future forest. Species may differ between field and pasture.
- **Allow for shrub and forest buffer zones alongside streams and rivers** – for integrity of aquatic ecosystems, maintenance and restoration of water quality, and travel corridors.
- **Maintain and allow re-growth of corridors** - Animals and plants depend on corridors such as hedgerows, fencerows, and unmowed swales for food, cover, movement and nesting.
- **Encourage field nesting birds** - Mow or bush-hog open non-agricultural fields in Fall, or burn fields in the Spring.
- **Protect rare and uncommon species** – Before developing site plans, find out from the Fish and Wildlife Department if any are known to occur on the property.
- **Site houses, driveways, roads and utility corridors around existing patches of natural vegetation** - Limit cutting into the forested areas; fragmentation destroys habitat and changes forest to “edge.”
- **Keep lawn area to a minimum**
- **Plan for sustainability of the total ecosystem** -Consult with a county forester or a professional forester to develop a management

