



**NEW JERSEY
AUDUBON**

**Guide to Agricultural
Best Management Practices
Riparian Buffers**

2025



What is a Riparian Buffer?

An area along a river, stream, wetland, or other body of water planted with herbaceous or woody vegetation.

Riparian buffers provide shade, which reduces stream temperatures for aquatic life. Buffers also filter sedimentation caused by runoff from agricultural fields and roads, and protect water quality by reducing the impact of nearby land uses.



What are the benefits of riparian buffers?

- ✿ Reduced soil erosion
- ✿ Streambank stabilization
- ✿ Improved wildlife habitat
- ✿ Air and water quality protection
- ✿ Reduction in flood water impacts



Native shrubs planted in Salem County to protect a sensitive wetland from nearby agricultural production grounds.



General Considerations:

- ✿ Managing invasive species within the existing riparian zone prior to planting helps protect the integrity of the buffer and increases the success of new plantings.
- ✿ Buffer widths can vary in size from 25 feet to 300 feet, but a 50-foot minimum width is recommended for maximum water quality benefits.
- ✿ Plantings can be installed in the spring or the fall. Timing the planting depends on stock size, weather and other factors.
- ✿ Installing tree tubes or cages protects the plants from deer browse during the first years of establishment.
- ✿ The larger the buffer, the more ecological benefits it can provide.
- ✿ Select native plants that are native to your eco-region. Native plants provide critical habitat resources for wildlife and are adapted to the ecological conditions of their particular area. Avoid cultivars and opt for straight-species.
- ✿ The most effective buffers will have an herbaceous zone with native warm season grasses and wildflowers alongside a tree and shrub planting.



Examples of native plants for New Jersey riparian buffers



Arrowwood



Buttonbush



Elderberry



Silky Dogwood

For assistance planning a riparian buffer on your land,
contact New Jersey Audubon's
Stewardship Department

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