



Be LakeSmart Lakes Environmental Association



LakeSmart Tip: Live Staking

“Live staking” is an easy and inexpensive way to grow new woody plants along a lakefront where the soil is typically moist and the setting is often sunny for at least a significant portion of the day. Its ease and lack of cost gives live staking an advantage over hand-planting nursery plants or transplanting established plants. It is also a great way to stabilize your shoreline.

A live stake is a dormant cutting taken from an established plant. The cutting is typically about 2 to 3 feet long and is pushed into the soil or inserted into a predrilled hole 18 inches to 2 feet into the ground in the spring, before the active growing season.



The plants which are found in Maine and most successfully survive live staking are:

- **Buttonbush** (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)
- **Red Twig Dogwood** (*Cornus sericea*) – also known as Red Osier Dogwood

LakeSmart is a program of Maine Lakes, run in the Lake Region by the Lakes Environmental Association. For more information about how you can help protect Maine lakes, visit www.mainelakes.org or www.lakes.me

- **Ninebark** (*Physocarpus opulifolius*)
- **Pussy Willow** (*Salix discolor*)
- **Elderberry** (*Sambucus canadensis*)
- **Arrowwood** (*Viburnum dentatum*)
- **Nannyberry** (*Viburnum lentago*)

Cultivated varieties of these plants should also work reasonably well. For instance, **Yellow Twig Dogwood** (*Cornus sericea* 'Flaviramea') works well. Purple leaf varieties of Ninebark, dwarf Buttonbush and Arrowwood Viburnum should also work just as well as their counterparts listed above.

If you want a lot of one of these plants, live staking is a way to get a lot of plants for little to no money.

Planting Instructions:

- Plants should be dormant before the active growing season in April. The stakes should be planted promptly after cutting them or purchasing them at a nursery.
- Plant a 3 foot stake 2 feet into the ground.
- Cut branches with several buds and nodes as these will form roots and new branches.
- Keep stakes moist and cool if storing them. Stakes must not dry out.
- If not planted promptly after cutting, all cuttings should be soaked in water for 5-7 days (a minimum of 24 hours). Soaking significantly increases the survival rate of the cuttings, however they must be planted the same day they are removed from water.
- Larger diameter stakes have more stored energy and often sprout more vigorously. The diameter of cuttings should be about the same as your thumb.
- Success will be maximized if the stake is planted in moist soil.
- Cut one end of the stake to a sharp point to help push it into the ground. Pre-drill a planting hole by hammering a wooden stake or piece of rebar into the ground or use an auger. Plant each stake's butt-end into the ground, with the leaf bud scars or emerging buds always pointing up. Be careful not to damage the buds, strip the bark, or split the stake during installation.

- Set the stake as deep as possible into the soil, preferably with 80 percent of its length into the soil and in contact with mid-summer moist soils. The stake should protrude only to a maximum of one-quarter its length above the ground level to prevent it from drying.

