

Steep Slopes

Steep slopes are tough sites. Plants are needed to prevent soil erosion and yet the site is usually difficult to work on for mowing or maintenance. Plants listed here are minimal maintenance choices that are attractive and hardy in Minnesota.

Compiled by Connie C. Collison, Cass County Master Gardener. This list has been compiled through personal experience of steep slopes and lakeshore restoration in the Cass and Crow Wing County area.



Daylilies and hosta provide color and cover on this steep residential slope.



Fragrant sumac 'Gro-low', a shorter, 2' cultivar, edges the roadway along a slope at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.

Botanical Name	Common Name	Height	Comments
Native Grasses			
<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	sideoats grama	1-2'	Common on dry prairies; can form sod and does well on steep slopes; at least partial sun.
<i>Elymus canadensis</i>	Canada wildrye	2-4'	Covers an area rapidly; self-seeds.
<i>Festuca ovina</i>	sheeps fescue	6-24"	Common on sandy soils; quite drought and shade tolerant; bunch grass.
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	red fescue	6-24"	Common lawn grass is quite shade and drought tolerant.
<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>	sand dropseed	12-30"	Dry prairie grass; grows in sand or on heavier soils; drought tolerant.
<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	little bluestem	2-4'	Blue summer foliage; clump forming with arching habit; bronze and orange fall color.
<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	switchgrass	3-6'	Native self-seeding grass with winter interest; good for wildlife.
Herbaceous Plants			
<i>Hemerocallis</i> spp.	daylily	1-3'	Low maintenance; many flr colors; long bloom time.
<i>Hosta</i> spp.	hosta	4"-4'	Excellent choice for partially to fully shaded slopes.
<i>Lamium</i> spp.	dead nettle	8-12"	White or pink flowers; leaves streaked white/silver.
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	rosemary	2-4'	Tough annual; can grow in dry, poor soils; aromatic.
<i>Viola</i> spp.	violet	6"	Beautiful flowers in spring; spreads rapidly.
Shrubs			
<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	black chokeberry	3-6'	Tolerates most soils; attractive foliage, fruit and flowers.
<i>Diervilla lonicera</i>	bush honeysuckle	2-4'	Sun or partial shade, a native tough low growing shrub.
<i>Euonymus alatus</i>	burning bush	4-8'	A favorite for highway or commercial landscapes; beautiful foliage, bark; great fall color.
<i>Juniperus horizontalis</i>	creeping juniper	1-2'	Creeps to 8-10'; a great shrub for most areas; will tolerate poor soil.
<i>Juniperus sabina</i>	savin juniper	3'	Many cultivars; spreads to 10'; delicate color; tolerates most soils; sun.
<i>Rhus aromatica</i>	fragrant sumac	2-6'	Attractive foliage; great fall color; <i>Rhus trilobata</i> , <i>R. glabra</i> , and <i>R. typhina</i> are good also.
<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	snowberry	4-6'	Beautiful flowers in spring; interesting fall leaf color; winter berries.
<i>Taxus cuspidata</i>	Japanese yew	5-6'	Great hardy plant that spreads.
<i>Taxus xmedia</i> 'Tauntonii'	Taunton yew	3-5'	Tolerates full sun to full shade.