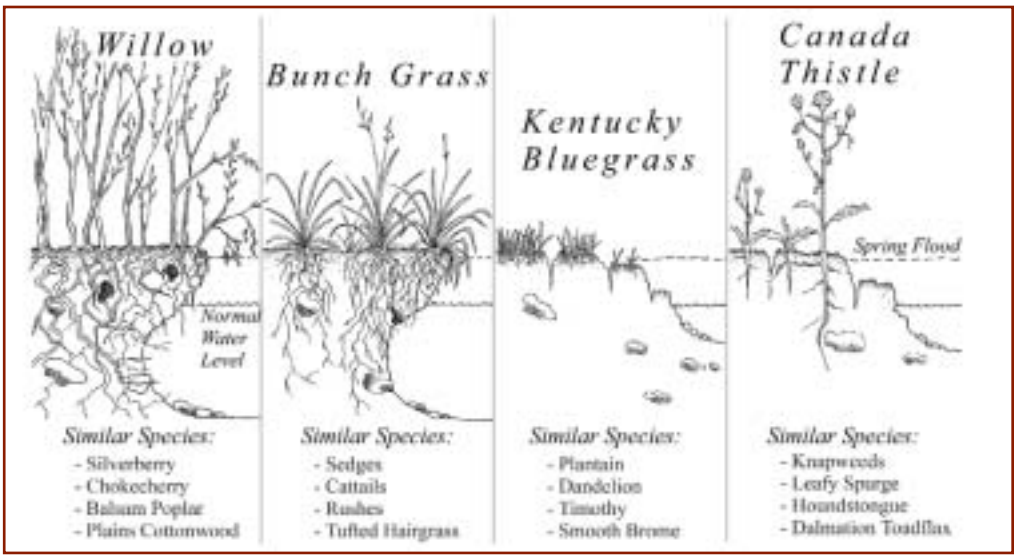
What's there and is it the right stuff?

The types of plants on the riparian area provide insight into health, so plant identification is important. Plants provide an indication of trend toward or away from the potential of the site (what the site could be). Coverage of native plants, woody species, weeds and disturbance-caused species provide clues to trends and to management influences. Utilization rates of some plants (e.g. woody species) that are key to riparian function provide clues to the ability of these plants to persist. The type of plants present is also an indicator of their effectiveness in performing several key functions like binding banks and shorelines together against the forces of erosion.



What is the right stuff? Willow and bunch grasses provide deep, binding root mass, while Kentucky bluegrass and Canada thistle do not.

A Guide to the **Right** Riparian Stuff

Vegetation Type

Riparian System	Trees	Preferred Shrubs	Other Shrubs	Native Grasses Forbs	Introduced Grass	Disturbance Species	Weeds
Large River	E	G	P	P	P	P	P
Small River	E	E/G	F/P	F/P	P	P	P
Large Stream	E	E	F	F	P	P	P
Small Stream	E	E	G	G	P	P	P
Intermittent Stream	E	E	E	E	G/F	P	P
Lake	E	E	G	G/F	P	P	P
Wetlands	E	E	E	E	F/P	P	P

Legend:

E=Excellent - these species have all the necessary properties of deep, binding and large root mass appropriate to riparian type or size.
G=Good - species meet most of the requirements for holding bank and shore materials together.
F=Fair - plants have marginal ability to perform stabilizing function.
P=Poor - vegetation unable to hold banks or shore together under normal circumstances.

Trees - e.g. cottonwoods, aspen, conifers, birch.
Preferred Shrubs - e.g. willows, saskatoon, dogwood, alder, silverberry, chokecherry.
Other Shrubs - e.g. rose, snowberry (buckbrush), shrubby cinquefoil.
Native Grasses, Forbs - e.g. sedges, cattails, tufted hairgrass, other bunch grasses and sod-forming grasses.
Introduced Grasses - e.g. Kentucky blue grass, timothy, smooth brome.
Disturbance Species - e.g. common dandelion, stinkweed, foxtail barley, plantains.
Weed Species - e.g. knapweeds, Canada thistle, leafy spurge.