



**MINNEHAHA CREEK  
WATERSHED DISTRICT**  
QUALITY OF WATER, QUALITY OF LIFE

## RAINGARDEN MAINTENANCE

You can help keep our water clean.

- Minimize the use of fertilizers and other lawn chemicals
- Keep leaves and grass clippings out of the street; compost yard waste
- Plant native vegetation to reduce irrigation and provide habitat for beneficial insects, songbirds, and other wildlife
- Properly dispose of oil, antifreeze, cleaners, and other household chemicals
- Wash dirty vehicles at a commercial car wash or on your lawn

Learn more:

Blue Thumb: Planting for Clean Water  
[www.bluthumb.org](http://www.bluthumb.org)

Metro Blooms  
[www.metroblooms.org](http://www.metroblooms.org)

U of M Stormwater Assessment and Maintenance:  
[stormwater.saf1.umn.edu](http://stormwater.saf1.umn.edu)

### WHAT IS STORMWATER RUNOFF?

In a natural environment, most rainwater soaks into the ground or is captured by trees and other plants. As land is developed, it is covered by hard surfaces - roads, parking lots and rooftops - that prevent natural infiltration, and allow water to quickly run downstream. This runoff, known as stormwater, carries dirt, fertilizer, pet waste, pesticides and debris into lakes, streams and wetlands. Polluted stormwater runoff is the number one water quality problem in Minnesota and across the country.

In many urban environments, stormwater is managed with storm sewer systems that quickly move stormwater away to prevent localized flooding. However, storm sewers often drain directly into lakes, streams and wetlands, rapidly carrying pollution into our valuable surface waters.

Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) are the primary method for dealing with polluted runoff. BMPs may include ponds, raingardens, porous pavement, green roofs, or other practices that temporarily hold, filter, or reduce stormwater. Slowing down or reducing the flow of water minimizes flooding and reduces the amount of pollution reaching downstream water bodies.

### WHAT IS A RAINGARDEN?

Raingardens are shallow depressions that capture stormwater and allow it to soak into the ground. Deep roots of perennial shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers break up compacted soil and promote infiltration. By catching stormwater where it falls, raingardens slow runoff, prevent erosion and decrease the amount of pollution flowing downstream to lakes, streams and wetlands. Raingardens also provide beautiful landscaping - which increases property values - and much needed habitat for birds, butterflies, and other wildlife in an urban environment.

A properly designed, constructed and maintained raingarden will drain in two days or less after a rain event. Regularly maintaining your raingarden ensures its clean water, aesthetic, and habitat benefits for years to come.



In order to minimize impacts of development on downstream water resources, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District often requires that BMPs are installed and maintained as a condition of a Watershed District permit. Properly designed and installed BMPs must be regularly maintained in order to achieve long-term clean water benefits.

- Proper maintenance allow raingardens to perform as designed, reducing flooding and improving water quality.
- Well-maintained raingardens remain effective much longer and cost less to maintain.
- Regular maintenance is less expensive than major non-routine maintenance or reconstruction costs that can result from a lack of maintenance.
- A well maintained raingarden is more aesthetically pleasing.

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Visit the MCWD Permitting webpage:  
[www.minnehahacreek.org/permits.php](http://www.minnehahacreek.org/permits.php)



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## MAINTENANCE TIPS

### Routine maintenance

Regular raingarden maintenance is similar to any landscaped area. Routine inspections after rain events will help you become familiar with your raingarden so you can identify small or potential problems when they are still easy to fix.

- Replace mulch or add rock to bare areas
- Replace dead or diseased plants
- Remove litter
- Stabilize eroded areas using small stones
- Remove accumulated sediment in inlets, outlets, bottom of basin, and pretreatment areas
- Replace weeds/invasive vegetation with raingarden plants
- Re-vegetate stormwater inlets to reduce incoming sediments
- During droughts, water raingarden plants that show signs of stress
- Follow MCWD inspection sheet to check for problems

### Signs that further maintenance is needed if:

- Standing water is noticeable after 48 hours
- Odor becomes a problem
- Runoff flows across, rather than into the raingarden
- There is visible damage to any structures associated with the raingarden

Note: If non-routine maintenance is needed, you should consult a professional or contact MCWD for more information.