

# Maplewood Rainwater Gardens

## Planting and Care

The summary on page 1 contains all the essential information you need for planting and caring for your rainwater garden. The remainder of the packet contains details and is best

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# Essential Information

This page summarizes essential information on planting and first-season care. This information is repeated and expanded on in the following pages.

## Prepare For Planting

1. If mulch is more than 2" thick, remove it 2-5 days before planting. This helps the soil dry out and ensures that you plant into the soil and not into the chips. For perennial gardens, rake the chips to the edges of the garden. For shrub gardens, you can just remove chips where each shrub will be planted.
2. Transfer design to the landscape. The Plant Spacing Guide suggests placement for the plants you receive. You can rearrange the garden design to suit your needs and preferences. The one guideline to remember is that only species that tolerate excessive moisture should be planted in the deep parts of the garden. In the original designs, the plants in the center of the design tolerate quite a bit of moisture.

## Planting Shrubs

1. Make sure there are no utilities where you are digging. The city will have utilities marked before planting day.
2. Dig a hole the depth of the container and twice the diameter of the container. If there are wood chips adjacent to your hole, use a sheet of plastic or a bucket for piling soil. Do not mix the soil with the wood chips.
3. Turn the container on its side and ease the shrub out.
4. If the roots wrap around encircling the soil ball, snip them with a pruner in three or four places.
5. Set the shrub in the hole. The top surface of the shrub's soil ball should be level with the soil surface of the garden. Adjust the depth if necessary.
6. Back fill the hole with the soil you set aside. You may want to mix some compost into this soil.
7. Water the shrub by thoroughly soaking the soil around the plant. Let the water seep in and then water again.
8. Apply 3"-5" layer of mulch, keeping wood chips 4" away from base of shrub.

## Planting Perennials

1. With a hand trowel, dig a hole the depth of the container and two to three times the diameter. If you encounter heavy clay soil that is difficult to plant into, you may wish to use a cordless drill with a bulb auger to dig the holes. The city usually has one available on planting day.
2. Remove plant from container and place in the hole. Adjust the hole depth if necessary. The soil ball should be level with the garden soil surface.
3. Fill the hole with the soil you removed. You may want to mix some compost into this soil.
4. Preen the soil firmly to anchor the plant and remove air pockets.
5. Water plants within 30 minutes of planting.
6. Apply 3"-5" layer of mulch, keeping wood chips 2"-4" away from base of shrub.

## First Season Care

Caring for your garden the first several weeks after planting is critical to its success. The most important tasks the first year are watering and weeding. Young, establishing plants need about an inch of rainfall or water per week. By the second or third season the plants will be able to handle short periods of drought. The best way to keep weeds out is to keep a 3"-5" layer of wood chips in place.

# Preparing for Planting

## Review Order and Garden Design

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### Review Order, Design, Plant Spacing

1. **Color brochure.** Your information packet includes a color brochure with the design for your garden type. This provides a general overview of the design. On smaller gardens, some species may have been dropped due to lack of space.
2. **Order sheet.** The order sheet indicates the size of your garden and the number of plants you will receive. You will receive enough plants for one of the standard size gardens. If your garden is smaller than the standardized garden, you can enlarge your garden or adjust the design to fit your smaller garden (you can keep any extra plants).
3. **Plant spacing guide.** The plant spacing guide shows you how to fit the plants you receive into your garden. Shrubs are spaced 3 or 4 feet apart, depending on the species. Perennials are spaced 1 to 1-1/2 feet apart.
4. **Design changes.** You can rearrange the garden design to suit your needs and preferences. The one guideline to remember is the deepest parts of the garden must be planted with moisture-tolerant species.

#### *Additional Information and Tips:*

- How do you know if a species can tolerate moisture? The original color designs are based on planting zones. The moisture-tolerant species are those that are in the center of the design.
- Don't be overwhelmed by the number of perennials in your order. They will need very small holes and, if mulch is removed ahead of time, most people will be able to plant 25 perennials per hour. Some people will be able to plant many more in an hour.
- Why are the perennials planted so closely together? Enough plants are provided so you can plant perennials 12" to 18" apart. When these plants are mature, final spacing for most will be 2 to 3 feet apart. We decided to plant them closely because the plants will be very small. Close planting will help them cover the ground more quickly, which will give the garden a fuller look sooner and help prevent weeds. In a few years, you can remove some of the plants to give the remaining plants more room to grow.

### Check Plants

1. When your plants arrive, check them against the plant order to make certain you received the correct species and number of plants. If there are problems with your order, please let staff know early on planting day.
2. Put your plants in a shaded, sheltered place and keep them moist until planting. Please do not leave them in the sun on an asphalt driveway.

# Preparing for Planting

## Prepare Planting Bed

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### Enlarge Garden if Necessary

If you are enlarging your garden, remove the sod around the garden edge.

1. Since the sod is new, it has not rooted in completely. Cut it into strips with a knife or garden spade and try pulling up strips. If strips don't pull up, you can use a garden spade to dig the sod.
2. Shake soil off the sod strips and return this soil to the garden.
3. Compost the sod or dispose of it at community compost site.

#### *Additional Information and Tips:*

- If you are removing a lot of sod, you may want to consider renting a sod cutter.
- Some people like to kill sod with an herbicide before removing it. We recommend you do not use herbicides or pesticides in your rainwater garden.
- If you do decide to use an herbicide to kill the sod around your garden, use it well before the planting day or your new plants could suffer. Read the herbicide label to determine when to herbicide. Round-Up®, for example, should be used at least 10-14 days before the sod is stripped and the garden is planted.

### Remove Wood Chips

If the wood chip mulch in your garden is more than 2", it is best to remove it four or five days before planting. This will help the garden dry out before planting.

1. **Method for perennial gardens.** Rake or shovel the chips to the edges of the garden. As you plant, apply the mulch to the planted area.
2. **Method for shrub areas.** Place a stake where each shrub will go. Rake the chips away from the stake, forming a 2-1/2 foot circle. When you dig the hole, pile the soil on a sheet of plastic or in buckets or a wheelbarrow. Do not mix the soil and wood chips! After planting, replace the wood chip mulch.

#### *Additional Information and Tips:*

- Can I pile the wood chips on my lawn? Piling chips on your lawn will stress the lawn. If the pile remains only a couple days, the lawn should recover. Be sure to pile chips on a tarp or piece of plastic so you don't have to rake them out of the grass later.
- Why does the city put wood chips in the gardens? The gardens are mulched to help prevent soil erosion; if the soil in the gardens is left bare, heavy rains can wash soil from the slopes down into the pit. In addition, the wood mulch protects the soil surface from sealing and caking. If the surface seals up, it is difficult for water to infiltrate. Finally, a thick layer of mulch prevents weeds from germinating.
- Please do not mix the wood chips into the soil. We are using the wood chips as mulch on top of the soil – not as a compost or soil amendment. When non-composted wood chips are mixed into the soil, they tie up the nitrogen and rob the plants of this essential nutrient.

# Preparing for Planting

## Transfer Design to the Landscape

### Determine Approach

There are many different approaches to transferring a garden design from paper to the landscape. Some people prefer an "eyeball" method while others prefer a more precise approach.

1. **Eyeball Method.** The eyeball method entails placing pots in the garden and moving them around until the spacing is pleasing. This approach will work well for the shrub gardens because the shrubs are large and in individual pots. It will be difficult for the perennial gardens since many of the perennials are in 4-packs.
2. **Precision Method.** This involves measuring and staking the garden into planting zones before placing pots. For the perennial gardens, we strongly recommend doing some marking or staking.

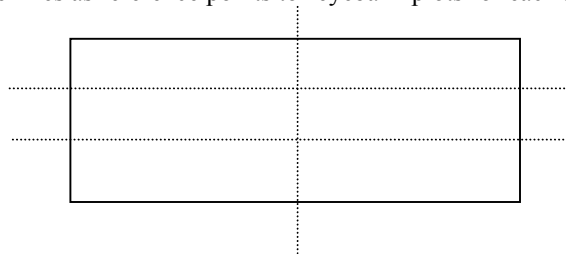
#### *Additional Information and Tips:*

- You can use many different materials for marking or staking. For example: lay hoses across the garden; anchor string or rope across the garden with rocks; line up branches, sticks or cheap yard sticks; use landscape paint, etc.

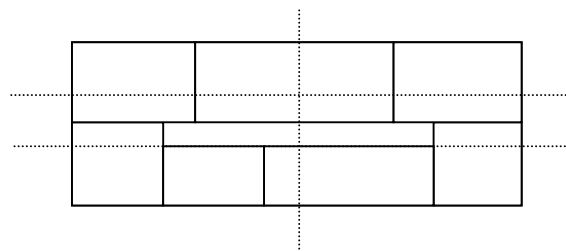
### Stake Garden

To stake or mark your garden:

1. Look at the Plant Spacing Guide for your garden. Most of the gardens are divided into lengthwise strips 1-1/2 to 3-feet wide. These strips do not cut across the whole garden, but you should be able to find a few dominant lines. Determine which strips you want to mark.
2. In the garden, mark the strips. You may want to use a tape measure, or pace off distances, or just estimate.
3. Mark the center line.
4. Use these lines as reference points to "eyeball" plots for each species.



5. If desired, you can go one step further and mark off plots for each species.



### Mark Plant Placement

After you have marked where each species goes, you can arrange pots or use small stakes to "eyeball" the correct spacing. Your Plant Spacing Guide indicates how many plants fit in each area. Small wooden stakes, tongue depressors, pencils, popsicle sticks, small branches, or stakes cut from milk jugs all work well for this.

# Planting Your Garden

## Planting Shrubs

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### Dig Hole

1. Make sure there are no utilities where you are digging. The city will have all utilities marked with spray paint or small flags.
2. Rake aside wood chips from the area you are going to dig.
3. Dig a hole the depth of the container and twice the diameter of the container.
4. If there are wood chips adjacent to your hole, use a sheet of plastic, a wheelbarrow, or a bucket for piling the soil. Don't mix soil and the wood chips!

### Plant

1. Turn the container on its side and ease the shrub out. If roots are circling around the soil ball, clip them in several spots with a pruner.
2. Set the shrub in the center of the hole. The top surface of the shrub's soil ball should be level to the soil surface in the garden.
3. Adjust the depth of the hole if necessary.
4. Backfill the hole with the soil you set aside, breaking apart any large clumps of soil. On some projects compost will be available to incorporate into the planting hole. This can be mixed with the soil taken from the planting hole.
5. If the shrub is on a slope, mound up a small soil dam on the downhill side of the plant to catch and hold water.
6. Tamp the soil. To tamp, use your foot to firmly press down the soil around the shrub. Don't use all your body weight or you may dislodge the shrub.

#### *Additional Information and Tips:*

- The shrubs do not require fertilization when planting. They received a slow-release fertilizer when they were containerized.
- If you do fertilize your plants at planting time, we recommend using a *slow*-release fertilizer in the planting hole. If you prefer to use a *quick*-release fertilizer, apply it after planting – if it is placed in the planting hole it may burn the plant's roots.

### Water

Water the shrub within one hour of planting. Shrubs need a lot of water the first watering. Use a hose or pails of water to thoroughly soak the soil around the plant. Let the water seep in and then water again.

### Prune

The shrubs in the gardens do not need pruning when you plant them unless:

1. A branch is broken, injured, or dead.
2. Large branches are crossing.

To prune:

1. Determine where to cut. You can prune a branch back to the next healthy-looking bud or branchlet. Or you can follow the branch back to a main stem. Buds facing towards the interior of the shrub tend to grow in that direction. Therefore, prune back to a bud or branch that points outward.
2. Use a pruning shears to cut the branch. Cut on a slight angle, leaving a 1/8" to 1/4" stump. Do not tear or rip branches - give them a clean cut.

# Planting Your Garden

## Planting Perennials

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### Dig Hole

1. Make sure the planting area is free of wood chips.
2. With a hand trowel, dig a hole the depth of the container and two to three times the diameter.
3. If the soil is loose, you may be able to use a hand fork to dig holes for small plants. Some gardeners use a bulb planter or bulb auger to dig holes for small plants.
4. If you encounter heavy clay soil, you may wish to use a cordless drill with a bulb auger to dig the holes. The city usually has one available on planting day.

### Plant

1. Remove the plant from its container:
  - a. For individual pots, turn the container on its side and gently knock out the plant.
  - b. For 4-packs or 6-packs, turn the container upside down. Put one hand under the plant and with your other hand gently squeeze the bottom sides of an individual plant cell. This will force out the plant.
2. Place the plant in the hole and adjust the depth of the hole if necessary. The roots should be below the soil surface; the stems and leaves should be above the soil surface.
3. Fill the hole with the soil you removed.
4. It is not necessary to fertilize your plants at planting time. However, if you have weed-free compost you may want to incorporate it into the planting hole, mixing it with soil.
5. Press the soil firmly to anchor the plant.
6. For plants on a slope, mound up a small soil dam on the downhill side of each plant to help retain water.

### Water

Water perennials within 30 minutes of planting. On a hot day, smaller plants may need to be watered sooner. For the first watering, it is strongly recommended that you use a pitcher or watering can and water the soil at the base of each plant (used milk cartons work well). A strong blast from a hose can dislodge and damage plants.

# Planting Your Garden

## Mulch The Garden

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### Mulch

When you finish planting, replenish the mulch.

1. Spread a 3"-5" thick layer of wood chips on top of the soil.
2. Near shrubs, you may be able to use a spade or bucket to place wood chips. Keep wood chips 4" away from base of shrub.
3. Near perennials, you will need to use your hands to place the wood chips and avoid covering the new plants. Try to keep the mulch at least 2" to 4" away from the small plants.

#### *Additional Information and Tips:*

- Why do I need to mulch? Mulching helps prevent soil erosion. If the soil in the gardens is bare, heavy rains can wash soil from the slopes down into the pit. In addition, the wood mulch protects the soil surface from sealing and caking. When the surface seals up, it is difficult for water to infiltrate. Finally, a thick layer of mulch prevents weeds from germinating and helps the soil retain moisture.
- Why do I need to keep wood chips away from the base of plants? Keeping the chips away from the stems improves air circulation around the plant, which can help prevent disease.
- What type of mulch is best? When it rains, light-weight mulch and flat wafer-like woodchips will float and clog the drain in your garden. Therefore, we recommend fibrous shredded wood chips. This type of chip will bind together and stay in place.
- Please do not use rock mulch in the rainwater gardens. Rocks are not absorbent like wood chips and they compact the soil, hindering infiltration.
- The wood chip mulch is meant to stay on top of the soil – not to be mixed into the soil. As wood chips decay, they add nutrients and organic matter to soil. However, the decaying process ties up nitrogen in the soil, robbing plants of this essential nutrient.

# Caring For Your Rainwater Garden

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## First Season

Caring for your garden the first several weeks after planting is critical to its success. The most important tasks the first year are watering and weeding. Young, establishing plants need about an inch of rainfall or water per week.

## Watering

By the second or third season your plants should be fairly well established and most of the plants will be able to handle short periods of drought. During longer drought periods, you will need to water your garden. A general rule of thumb is 1" of water per week. Plants need moisture well into the fall, especially shrubs and trees.

### *Additional Information and Tips:*

- The best way to water is to use a hose to water around the base of each plant. While this is the most time-consuming method of watering, it is best for the plant (keeps foliage dry which helps prevent disease) and for the environment (wastes the least amount of water).
- When you use a sprinkler, much of the water is lost and plants are not evenly watered. If you choose to use a sprinkler, use it in the morning. If you water late in the day, the foliage may not dry before nightfall and plants will be more susceptible to disease.

## Weeds, Mulch, And Edging

Plants compete with each other for nutrients, light, water, and space. Weeds, when given a chance, will almost always win. If weeds are rampant in your garden, your ornamental plants will suffer and your garden will look messy and unkempt. The easiest thing you can do to keep weeds out is to mulch. Shredded wood chips and compost make excellent mulch. As mentioned previously, flat wafer-like woodchips will float and clog the drain in your garden.

1. If you keep a 3" - 5" layer of wood chips or other mulch on your garden, your garden should have very few weeds and will just require an occasional quick weeding. A 1" to 2" layer of chips will help protect the soil surface, but is not enough to prevent weeds.
2. Wood chips decay and need to be replaced every year or two. As your perennials grow larger they will take up more space and will crowd out weeds. You may eventually need little or no mulch.
3. If grass begins to invade your garden from the edges, you may need to install edging. See *Enhancing Your Rainwater Garden*.

### *Additional Information and Tips:*

- Some tree trimming companies will deliver large quantities of wood chips for free. You can also pick up free wood chips at some of the Ramsey County compost sites. Contact St. Paul Neighborhood Energy Consortium (651-222-7678) for a list of compost sites that provide free wood chips.

# Caring For Your Rainwater Garden

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## Fertilizer and Compost

The plants selected for the rainwater gardens do *not* require rich, fertile soil, or lots of fertilizer. Most homeowners will not need to fertilize. However, if growth appears poor and sluggish, or if plants are yellowing or discolored, you may want to consider fertilizing.

To use a fertilizer:

1. **Do a soil test.** Ideally, you should not use fertilizer unless you know your soil is deficient in some nutrient. The University of Minnesota Extension Service (UMN-Extension) tests garden soil for a fee. Contact UMN-Extension through the Yard and Garden Line (612-624-4771) or via the internet at [www.extension.umn.edu](http://www.extension.umn.edu).
2. **Select fertilizer.** The soil test will tell you what nutrients you need to add and at what quantities. You must then consider four issues:
  - a. *When to apply fertilizer.* For the rainwater gardens, we recommend applying nitrogen in spring when plants begin growing. (In fall, nitrogen is more susceptible to leaching.) Phosphorus and potassium can be applied in spring or fall. Keep in mind that lawns have different needs than gardens and these recommendations are only for rainwater gardens.
  - b. *Quick-release or slow-release fertilizer?* Slow-release fertilizers release nutrients slowly over a period of weeks or months; quick-release fertilizers release nutrients immediately. For shrubs and perennials we recommend using a slow-release fertilizer. The slow-release fertilizers pose less risk of "burning" plants and less risk of leaching nitrogen. Their main disadvantage is they cost more than quick-release fertilizers.
  - c. *Organic or inorganic fertilizer?* Organic fertilizers are derived from plants or animals and include things like composted manure, bone meal, blood meal, etc. They may also include non-plant and animal substances such as elemental sulfur and gypsum. Inorganic fertilizers are usually petroleum based. There are environmental advantages and disadvantages to both.
  - d. *Whether to use compost.* Well-composted yard waste can add nutrients to soil and help improve soil structure. In gardens with fertile soil, regular applications of compost may be adequate fertilization. UMN-Extension indicates that, for a 100-square foot garden, if you apply four to six 5-gallon buckets of compost you can cut the recommended fertilizer in half.
3. **Apply fertilizer properly.** Always read and follow the label when using fertilizers. In new gardens, fertilizer can be incorporated into the top 4" - 6" of soil before planting. When planting shrubs, slow-release fertilizer can be mixed with soil in the bottom of the planting hole. For established gardens, push aside the wood chips or other mulch, sprinkle fertilizer directly on the soil around the plant, work it gently into the top 1/2" of soil with a hand fork or rake, water it in, and replace mulch.

### *Additional Information and Tips:*

- Using too much fertilizer or applying it incorrectly can damage plants and degrade the environment.
- The nutrients plants need in largest quantities are nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K). When you purchase a bag of fertilizer, the three numbers on the bag refer to these nutrients. For example, 20-10-15 indicates the fertilizer is 20% nitrogen, 10% phosphate (P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>), 15% potash (K<sub>2</sub>O).
- Nitrogen is very mobile in the soil and may leach and contaminate groundwater. Because nitrogen is so mobile, it is not tested in the basic soil test; recommendations for nitrogen are based on organic content of the soil sample.
- Phosphorus fertilizer runoff from residential lawns is a major cause of pollution in lakes. It enters lakes and streams causing algae to grow and degrading water quality. Most soils in the Twin Cities have adequate phosphorus levels and do not need phosphorus fertilizer.
- For more information on fertilizing see: *Soil Test Interpretations and Fertilizer Management for Lawns, Turf, Gardens, and Landscape Plants*, by C. Rosen, P. Bierman, and R. Eliason, available for purchase from UMN-Extension or on-line ([www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG1731.html](http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG1731.html)).

# Caring For Your Rainwater Garden

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## Dividing Perennials

As your garden ages, the perennials will grow large and may become crowded. You may need to remove plants or divide plants. In addition, after several years some species may begin to decline or die in the center of the clump. Dividing them will enhance their vigor.

1. **Removing plants.** The plants selected for the gardens can be removed anytime of year but it is easiest, and least disruptive to other plants, to remove them in early spring before they are 4" tall.
2. **Dividing plants.** Most of the plants selected for the rainwater gardens are best divided in early spring before they are 4" tall. Dig up the whole plant with a spade or garden fork. Use a knife, spade, or ax to cut the plant into two or more pieces. Each piece will need to have roots and a portion of the crown (area where roots meet stems). If you cannot plant the divisions immediately, pot them with additional soil and keep them well watered.

## Pinching and Deadheading Perennials

Some gardeners like to pinch and deadhead perennials. These practices are *not* required for your rainwater garden. However, they do benefit some species and you may wish to do them.

1. **Pinching** means to cut or pinch young stems back a couple inches to just above a bud or leaf. It is done to make the plant bushier or more compact, to delay blooming, and to encourage new plants to put energy into root and shoot production rather than into flowering. Pinching is often done with species such as chrysanthemum.
2. **Deadheading** means cutting off dead flower heads. In some species this increases the duration of the bloom time – instead of putting energy into seed production, the plant creates more flowers. To deadhead, after the flower petals fade or die cut the flower off at the base of the flower head.

## Removing Diseased or Dead Stalks

Most of the plants selected for the garden are fairly disease resistant. Prevention is an important strategy in handling disease. To prevent disease:

1. Remove dead and diseased plant material from the garden.
2. Keep weeds to a minimum.
3. Minimize stress to the plant by making sure it has adequate water and nutrients.
4. Keep the foliage dry. This means when watering, water early in the day and don't wet the foliage.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between disease, nutrient deficiency, and insect damage. The UMN-Extension Yard and Garden Line (612-624-4771) can help you diagnose problems and suggest solutions.

## More Information

The University of Minnesota Extension Service has a wealth of information on lawns and gardens and can answer specific questions as well. Call their Yard and Garden Line at 612-624-4771. Much of their information is available on-line at [www.extension.umn.edu](http://www.extension.umn.edu). In addition you can call INFO-U at 612-624-2200 to hear free taped messages on garden care.

# Caring For Your Rainwater Garden

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## Pruning Shrubs

1. The shrubs selected for the rainwater garden all have a nice natural form and do not require pruning to maintain their form. You may occasionally need to prune your shrubs to:
  - a. Remove dead, diseased, or injured branches.
  - b. Remove crossing or rubbing branches.
  - c. Keep branches from growing toward the center of the shrub.
  - d. Rejuvenate the plant.
3. If you want a shorter shrub, it is best to plant a variety that naturally grows shorter, rather than forcing it to be short through repeated pruning.
4. The number one mistake in pruning is shearing across the top of the shrub to make the plant shorter. Please don't do this. Cutting the top off causes the shrub to bush out above the cut and this often leads to a bottom with little foliage. In addition, severe pruning like this the first year or two could harm the plant.
5. If you want to train your shrubs into a formal hedge, please seek professional help. Hedging is an art that requires special techniques and knowledge and results are best with specific species.
6. The only pruning tools needed are a pruning shears to cut small stems and a lopper to cut larger stems.
7. Pruning time and methods differ for different species. Recommendations for the shrubs in the rainwater gardens are provided:

***Highbush cranberry, Hydrangea, Red-twig dogwood.*** The varieties of cranberry, hydrangea, and dogwood selected for the rainwater gardens grow 4' - 6' high. It is best to let these shrubs grow to their natural height and form. The best time to prune these three species is very early spring before the shrub begins growing.

- To remove damaged or rubbing branches, cut the injured branch back to the next growing point (bud or leaf) or to the main stem.
- After the plant is well established (at least two or three years old), you may want to prune annually in spring, but this is not required. For annual pruning, cut the largest (oldest) stems all the way back to the ground. You can cut up to 1/3 of the stems. This type of pruning is especially recommended for red-twig dogwood because the red color is most intense on younger stems.

***Spirea.*** The spirea selected for your rainwater garden is a 3' - 4' bush with a nice natural form. The best time to prune this species is very early spring before the shrub begins actively growing.

- To remove damaged or rubbing branches, cut the injured branch back to the next growing point (bud or leaf) or cut back to a main stem.
- After spirea is well established (at least three years old), you may wish to prune annually as explained above for high bush cranberry. If the plant is old, you can do a renewal pruning. To do this, cut all the branches back to about 2" above the ground in late winter or very early spring. Do not do this more often than every third year or the shrub may suffer. Renewal pruning of this type benefits some species but harms others, so be sure to check a pruning reference before trying this on other species.

# Annual Garden Cleanup

## Annual Schedule

### Tasks for early spring (before new growth in 3" high):

- Cut and remove dead stalks and seed heads left from previous season
- Remove sticks and debris
- Weed
- Prune shrubs if necessary (see section on *Pruning Shrubs*)
- Divide and move plants if they are too crowded (see section on *Dividing Perennials*)
- Replenish mulch to 3" - 5" layer

### Tasks for late spring and summer:

- Weed, water during severe drought, and enjoy

### Tasks for fall:

- Remove weeds and diseased plants
- Cut back dead stalks and seed heads if desired (preferable to do in spring so can enjoy aesthetics and ecological benefits)
- Remove excess tree leaves from garden (see below)
- If fall is dry, water plants until the ground begins to freeze (late October). Even though flowers and leaves fade in fall, plants continue working. It is especially important that trees and shrubs have good moisture entering the winter since their woody stems must survive winter above ground.

## Removing Dead Stalks

After perennials die back, dead stalks should be cut and removed from the garden. This can be done in late fall or in early spring.

1. *Fall removal* is recommended if your plants were diseased or had lots of insect pests. One benefit of removing plants in fall is that the soil will warm up a bit earlier in spring so plants will begin growing a bit earlier.
2. *Spring removal* has many benefits. Dried stalks and seed heads of many plants are attractive and provide ornamental interest in the garden through the winter. Some of them also provide seeds and perches for birds. In addition, stalks will help catch snow, providing good moisture for the garden in spring.

## Leaves in The Garden

Leaves are natural mulch and are good for your garden *in limited quantities*. A 2" - 4" layer of leaves in the garden is fine and beneficial. Here are a couple points to keep in mind:

- Do not use the garden as a place to dump leaves.
- Because the gardens are sunken they tend to collect many leaves. Excess leaves should be removed in fall or spring.
- If your garden has an overflow pipe, keep leaves and other debris away from this pipe. Excessive debris can clog the pipes. In addition, leaves contain phosphorus and if they enter streams and lakes they cause algae to grow and degrade water quality.
- Shredded leaves decompose faster and are better as mulch than whole leaves. An easy way to shred leaves is to rake them into piles 2" to 4" high and run the lawn mower over them. Using shredded leaves in the rainwater gardens is beneficial as long as the leaves do not go down the overflow pipe.

# Annual Garden Cleanup

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## Dealing with Yard Waste

Here are some suggestions for handling yard waste:

1. Create less waste. Lawn clippings and leaves are two big sources of yard waste that can easily be reduced. Rather than bagging grass clippings, let them fall into the lawn. UMN-Extension can provide you with information on low-maintenance lawn care. If lots of leaves fall in your yard, consider turning some of your yard into a "natural" woodland with a groundcover of ferns and wildflowers, instead of grass. In this setting, the leaves are needed in the garden and don't have to be raked or removed.
2. Compost it. It is easy and fun to have a home compost pile. Not only do you take care of your yard waste, you produce a rich compost to use as fertilizer in your garden. UMN-Extension and The St. Paul Neighborhood Energy Consortium (651-222-7678) can provide information on home compost piles.
3. Take it to a compost facility. There are several compost sites that accept yard wastes. The Maplewood Community Development Department (651-770-4560) or the St. Paul Neighborhood Energy Consortium (651-222-7678) can direct you to the site closest to your home.

# Enhancing Your Rainwater Garden

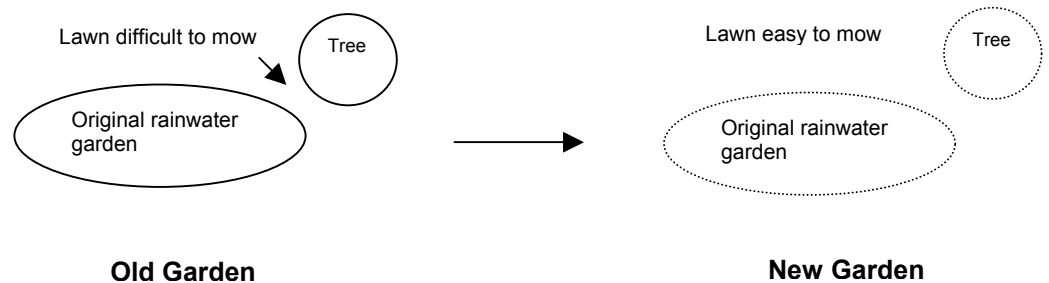
## Adding Plants

You may want to add additional plants to your garden. If you do, make sure that species you plant in the wettest part of the garden can tolerate excessive moisture.

1. Spring bulbs such as scilla, crocus, daffodils, and tulips are planted in fall and bring colorful blooms to your garden in spring. Most bulbs need drier soil so plant them in the dry upper zone of the garden.
2. Annuals such as marigolds, petunias, and zinnias can add continual color to your garden. They may be especially welcome the first year or two when the perennials are small. Note, however, that most annuals need fertilizer.
3. More perennials can also be added to provide additional color and blooming.

## Changing the Shape of Your Garden

You can change the size and shape of your rainwater garden to make mowing easier or to better fit your needs or sense of design. The gardens were designed as island beds surrounded by grass. An island bed can sometimes seem a little lost in a yard and you may want to make it a more integral part of your landscape. For example, if you have trees, shrubs, or other gardens nearby, you can connect them to the rainwater garden, making one large bed or border. If mowing around your garden is difficult due to steep slopes or narrow strips of lawn between the garden and other structures, you should strongly consider changing the shape. One fun way to try out different shapes is to drag a garden hose into various outlines. Once the shape is determined, remove sod as needed and plant the new areas.



## Edging

Edging a garden is done for both aesthetic and practical reasons. If grass is invading your garden from the edges, you should seriously consider installing edging. There are two important things to keep in mind when selecting edging material:

1. To create an effective barrier against grass rhizomes the edging should go at least 5" into the ground.
2. If the top of the edging is flush with the lawn you can use it as a mowing strip (one wheel of the lawn mower rides on the edging or in the garden). If the edging is raised more than 2" above the lawn, your lawn mower will not be able to cut the grass adjacent to the edging.

Rigid black plastic is generally the least expensive edging. While some people do not like the aesthetics of this, when installed properly it is barely noticeable. Brick or stone edging can be attractive and easy to install, but keep in mind that grass rhizomes will find their way between the bricks and stones, so you may want to use mortar as well. Metal, wood, and many other materials can also be used for edging.

## Adding boulders or timbers

You may want to add boulders or timbers to your garden for aesthetic or functional reasons. Some of the gardens have very steep slopes and boulders or timbers can help hold the slope and make it easier to establish plants.

