

Maplewood Rain Gardens

Planting and Care

For Gardens on Street Reconstruction Projects

Essential information for planting and caring for your rain garden is on page 1. The remainder of the packet provides details.

You do not need to read this entire document—all essential information will be covered at the Planting Day demonstration.

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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 garden was constructed and mulched in fall, and mulch is more than 1" thick, remove it three or four days before planting. This helps the soil dry out and ensures that you plant into the soil and not into the chips. If garden was just created and mulched, leave the mulch in place.
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 wet conditions.

Planting Shrubs

1. Make sure there are no utilities where you are digging. For gardens with shrubs, the city will have utilities marked prior to planting day.
2. Dig a hole the depth of the container and twice the diameter of the container. There is no need to dig deeper. If there is mulch adjacent to your hole, pile soil onto a sheet of plastic or into a bucket. Do not mix the soil with the mulch.
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.
7. Water the shrub, soaking the soil around the plant. Let the water seep in and then water again.

Planting Perennials

1. With a hand trowel, dig a hole the depth of the container and two times the diameter. Loosen the soil around the hole.
2. Remove plant from container and place in the hole. Adjust the hole's depth if necessary. The top of the soil ball should be level with the garden soil surface.
3. Be sure to PLANT INTO THE SOIL, NOT INTO THE MULCH.
4. Fill the hole with the soil you removed.
5. Press the soil firmly to anchor the plant.
6. Water plants within 60 minutes of planting.

Mulch

1. After planting, mulch the garden with shredded wood mulch. Use a 3"-4" layer of mulch for shrubs and large perennials. Use 2" for plugs.
2. On some projects, staff will mulch the gardens for residents after residents plant them.

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 water per week. By the second season the plants will be able to handle short periods of drought. The best way to keep weeds out is to keep a 3"-4" layer of shredded wood mulch in place.

Preparing for Planting

Review Order and Garden Design

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' apart, depending on the species. Perennials are spaced 1' to 2' apart, depending on the species.
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. 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 in the center of the design.

Additional Information and Tips:

- 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 20-35 perennials per hour.

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 inform staff as soon as possible.
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

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 shovel and try pulling up strips. If strips don't pull up, you can use a shovel 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 a community compost site.

Remove Mulch

If your garden was constructed and mulched in fall, and the mulch is more than 1" deep, it is best to remove the mulch three or four days before planting. This will help the garden dry out before planting.

1. **Method for perennial gardens.** Rake or shovel the mulch to the edges of the garden. As you plant, move the piled mulch back into the planted area.
2. **Method for shrub areas.** Place a stake where each shrub will go. Rake the mulch 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 mulch! After planting, add additional mulch.

Additional Information and Tips:

- Why does the city put shredded wood mulch 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.
- Can I pile the shredded wood mulch on my lawn? Piling mulch on your lawn will stress the lawn. If the pile remains only one day, the lawn should recover if it was fully established.
- Please do not mix the shredded wood mulch into the soil. We are using the shredded wood as mulch on top of the soil – not as a compost or soil amendment. When non-composted wood mulch is mixed into the soil, it ties up the nitrogen and robs 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 like to be more precise.

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 at least a little marking or staking.

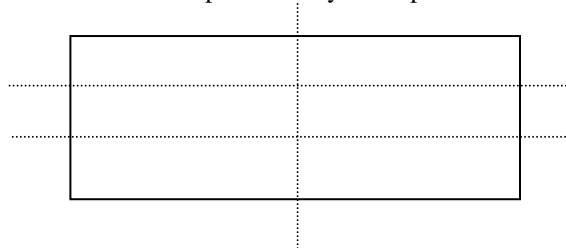
Additional Information and Tips:

- 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.

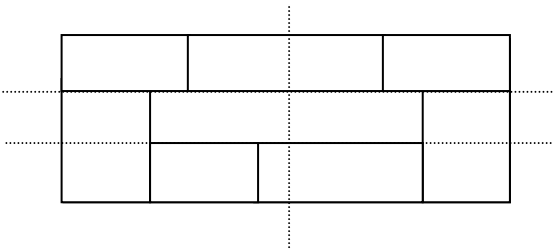
Stake Garden

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 marking where each species goes, some people like to use small stakes to mark 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

Dig Hole

1. Make sure there are no utilities where you are digging. The city will have all utilities marked prior to planting day.
2. Rake aside mulch 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 is mulch adjacent to your hole, use a sheet of plastic, a wheelbarrow, or a bucket for piling the soil. Don't mix soil and mulch!

Plant

1. Turn the container on its side and ease the shrub out. If roots are circling the soil ball, clip them in two or three spots with a pruner.
2. CAUTION! Sometimes the shrubs are not rooted into the pot and the soil ball falls apart when the shrub is removed from the container. This will not hurt the shrub but be sure to plant it immediately and do not leave the roots exposed to the air.
3. Set the shrub in the center of the hole. The top surface of the shrub's soil ball should be level with the soil surface in the garden.
4. Adjust the depth of the hole if necessary.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Tamp the soil. To tamp, use the toe of your shoe 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 received a slow-release fertilizer when they were potted and do not need additional fertilizer.
- If you believe you need to 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. Using a quick-release fertilizer in the planting hole may burn the plant's tender roots.

Water

Water shrubs within one hour of planting or sooner on a hot day. 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 twig. 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

Dig Hole

1. If garden was mulched the fall before planting, rake mulch to the edges of the garden.
2. If garden was recently mulched, brush mulch away from each planting hole as you plant.
3. With a hand trowel, dig a hole a bit deeper than the container and two to three times the diameter.
4. If the soil is loose, you may be able to use a hand fork to dig holes.

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. All the roots should be below the soil surface.
3. Be sure to **PLANT INTO THE SOIL, NOT INTO THE MULCH.**
4. Fill the hole with the soil you removed.
5. Press the soil firmly to anchor the plant.
6. For plants on a slope, make a small soil dam on the downhill side of each plant to help retain water.
7. It is not necessary to fertilize your plants at planting time.

Water

1. Water perennials within 30-60 minutes of planting. On a hot day, smaller plants may need to be watered sooner.
2. For the first watering, 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

Mulch

When you finish planting, replenish the mulch. On some projects, staff will mulch the gardens after residents plant.

1. Near shrubs, spread a 4"-thick layer of shredded mulch on top of soil. Keep mulch 3" away from base of shrub.
2. For perennial gardens, spread a 2"-4" layer of shredded wood mulch on top of the soil. You will need to use your hands to place the wood mulch and avoid covering the new plants.
3. If plants are very small, you may want to use pot protectors to keep the mulch off the plants. A simple protector can be made by cutting out the bottom a 4" plant pot and placing this around the plant.

Additional Information and Tips:

- What type of mulch is best? When it rains, light-weight mulch and flat wafer-like woodchips will float in rain gardens. Therefore, we recommend fibrous shredded wood mulch. This type of mulch will bind together and stay in place.
- 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.
- What is the difference between mulch and compost? Mulch is placed on top of the soil; it is not mixed into the soil. Compost is decomposed organic matter that is mixed into the soil to add nutrients and improve soil structure.
- Avoid mixing wood mulch into the soil. As wood mulch decays, it adds nutrients and organic matter to soil. However, the decaying process temporarily ties up nitrogen in the soil, robbing plants of this essential nutrient.
- Why do I need to keep wood mulch away from the base of shrubs? Keeping the mulch away from the stems improves air circulation around the plant, which can help prevent disease.
- Please do not use rock mulch in the rain gardens. Rocks are not absorbent like wood mulch and they may compact the soil, hindering infiltration.



Pots with bottoms cut out can protect small plants from shifting mulch.

Caring For Your Rain Garden

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.

Long-term 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. 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 and Mulch

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 mulch is an excellent mulch for rain gardens. If you keep a 3" - 4" layer of mulch on your garden, your garden should have very few weeds and will just require an occasional quick weeding. A 1" layer of mulch will help protect the soil surface, but is not enough to prevent weeds.

1. Shredded wood mulch decays and needs 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.

Additional Information and Tips:

- Some tree trimming companies will deliver large quantities of wood chips for free. You may be able to pick up free wood mulch at some of the Ramsey County compost sites. Contact Ramsey County for information (www.co.ramsey.mn.us). But caution, be sure to ask for shredded wood mulch, not wood chips.

Caring For Your Rain Garden

Fertilizer and Compost

The plants selected for the rain 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. For more information, see UMN-Extension website: 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 rain 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 rain 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 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 (N), 10% phosphate (P₂O₅), 15% potash (K₂O).
- 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).

Caring For Your Rain Garden

Dividing Perennials

As your garden ages, the perennials will grow large and may become crowded. You may need to remove 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. **Dividing plants.** Most of the plants selected for the rain gardens are best divided in early spring before they are 4" tall. Dig up the whole plant with a shovel or garden fork. Use a knife, shovel, 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 rain 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 or to delay blooming. Pinching is often done with species such as New England Aster.
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 fall off, cut the flower off at the base of the flower stalk.

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. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between disease, nutrient deficiency, and insect damage. To prevent disease:

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

More Information

The University of Minnesota Extension Service has a wealth of information on lawns and gardens at: 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 Rain Garden

Pruning Shrubs

1. The shrubs selected for the rain 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 or saw to cut larger stems.
7. Pruning time and methods differ for different species. Recommendations for the shrubs in the rain gardens are provided:

Highbush cranberry, Hydrangea, Red-twig dogwood. The varieties of cranberry, hydrangea, and dogwood selected for the rain 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. To prune, cut a few of the largest (oldest) stems back to the main stem or to the ground.
- For red-twig dogwood, cut up to 1/3 of the thickest (oldest) stems back to the ground each year. This will maintain the brilliant red color of the stems since the red is most intense on younger stems.

Spirea. The spirea selected for your rain 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 can prune by cutting the whole shrub back to about 1' high in late winter or very early spring.
- If the plant is very 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 often 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 is 3" high):

- Cut and remove dead stalks and seed heads left from previous season
- Remove sticks and debris
- 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" - 4" layer

Tasks for late spring and summer:

- Weed, water during severe drought, and enjoy

Tasks for fall:

- Remove weeds and diseased plants
- Remove excess tree leaves from garden (see below)
- If fall is dry, water trees and shrubs until the ground begins to freeze (late October). Trees and shrubs need 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.
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" - 3" layer of leaves in the garden is fine. Here are a couple points to keep in mind:

- Do not use the rain 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 encourage algae to grow, which degrades water quality and habitat for fish.
- 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 rain gardens is beneficial as long as the leaves do not go down the overflow pipe.

Annual Garden Cleanup

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 provides information on low-maintenance lawn care at www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG7552.html. 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 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.
3. Take it to a compost facility. There are several compost sites that accept yard wastes. See Ramsey County's website for the compost facility closest to you: www.co.ramsey.mn.us.

Enhancing Your Rain Garden

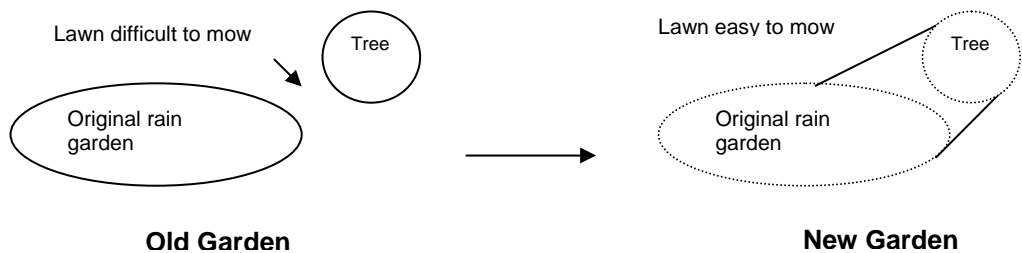
Adding Plants

You may want to add plants to your garden. If you do, make sure the 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 blooms.

Changing the Shape of Your Garden

You can change the size and shape of your rain 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 rain 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 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.



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.