

## **Residential Rain Garden Maintenance**

This is a guide for homeowners who wish to maintain rain gardens on their own.

### **YEAR ONE (after planting)**

#### **Watering**

- ~ For the first three weeks after planting, water the rain garden once per week. It is not necessary to water during a given week if one-inch of rain accumulates.
- ~ Water the garden during drought periods in mid-summer, if needed.

#### **Weeding and Plant Care**

- ~ Using a field guide, identify what is a weed versus what is a rain garden plant. Remove identified weeds. TIP: You may want to mark rain garden plants with small planting stakes until they are established.
- ~ Leave seed heads on perennials through the winter for wildlife.

#### **Drainage**

- ~ Check for signs of erosion around edge of the rain garden. If there are rills or gullies within or adjacent to the rain garden, from the water entrance point, add rocks or stones to break up the flow of the water. If there is erosion out of the rain garden, build up the soil and add plants. Replace rocks that may be diverting flow out of the garden. Build up areas where more protection is needed



### **YEAR TWO AND BEYOND**

#### **General maintenance**

- ~ When new growth begins in the spring, cut back dead plant material 2" inches about the ground.
- ~ Remove and replace dead or diseased plants.
- ~ Visually inspect the rain garden for trash and pet waste and remove.
- ~ Make sure runoff still drains within 24 hours of a rainfall event. If water stands for more than 24 hours, try building berms and/or adding plants or adding COARSE sand (not sandbox sand) with organic mulch to the rain garden to help infiltrate the water
- ~ Check for movement of soil within the garden. If this is occurring, install more native plants.
- ~ Check for movement of soil from within the garden to areas outside the garden. If this is occurring, your rain garden may be undersized for the amount of runoff it is attempting to infiltrate. Consider expanding your rain garden.
- ~ Check for sedimentation. Occasionally use a flat shovel to remove any excess



#### **Watering**

- ~ Water only if plants show signs of drought stress.

**Mulch**

- ~ Maintain 2" of non-dyed hardwood mulch on your rain garden, as it will reduce hardpan formation and help absorb runoff. Add mulch annually as needed. Take care not to bury the root flares of the plants.

**Weeding**

- ~ Weed as needed until the rain garden plants are fully established. Once established, the plants will cover the ground plane, shade out weeds and form a dense root mass that helps with infiltration.  
TIP: It is still worthwhile to monitor the garden for weeds once every three to four weeks during the summer.

**Drainage**

- ~ Check for signs of erosion around edge of the rain garden. If there are rills or gullies within or adjacent to the rain garden, from the water entrance point, add rocks or stones to break up the flow of the water. If there is erosion out of the rain garden, build up the soil and add plants. Replace rocks that may be diverting flow out of the garden. Build up areas where more protection is needed
- ~ Fertilizing is not a part of maintaining your rain garden. The garden sustains itself with the help of organic material in the topsoil. Rain gardens are meant to help remove excess nutrients from runoff, and adding fertilizer will contribute to excess nutrient loading. Also, native plants do not require supplemental fertilizer.