



# Raingarden Maintenance

Congratulations on installing your new raingarden!

The following maintenance guidelines and gardening tips will help you to keep your raingarden functioning and looking great for decades to come.

Remember, this is a perennial garden that functions to keep water clean. Please do not add fertilizers or pre-emergent herbicides. With the proper amount of water and maintenance, the plants will thrive on their own. Caring for your garden during the first several weeks after planting is critical to its success.



Blue Thumb - Apple Valley



Blue Thumb



Brown's Creek W.D.



Blue Thumb - Dakota County



Blue Thumb - Mahtomedi

## Maintenance Activities

### Watering

After planting, water your raingarden two times per week for the next four weeks. For the remainder of the first growing season, make sure your garden gets 1" of water per week (including rain). After the first year, you won't need to water your raingarden unless there is a prolonged drought.

It is best to water around the base of each plant using a hose (with light water pressure) or a watering pot instead of a sprinkler. This may be the most time consuming; however, it is best for the plants, keeps foliage dry, helps prevent disease, and reduces water usage.

### Weeding



The easiest way to keep weeds from taking over your new raingarden is to maintain mulch and perform light weeding at least three times a year for the first three years.

When weeding, try to disturb the soil as little as possible and re-cover bare soil with mulch to keep new weeds from seeding. Consult your original planting plan if you are uncertain which plants are weeds.

### Mulch

Cover your raingarden with 3" deep of double shredded hardwood mulch (inter-locks and will not float when the raingarden fills with water, unlike wood chips).

Inspect the mulch each spring and add new mulch as needed to maintain a 3" depth in areas not covered by plants. Mulch will help to suppress weeds and also retain soil moisture.

### Replacing and Adding Plants

Use [www.BlueThumb.org](http://www.BlueThumb.org) or the Blue Thumb Guide to Raingardens to select new plants and replacement plants that will grow well in your raingarden.

If there are empty spaces in your garden, consult the original design to see which plants are missing. Too much or too little sunlight, pest damage, or too much or too little water could be to blame. If the garden gets lots of water, you may need to use larger plants that won't be drowned when the garden fills up.

If animals or insects are eating your plants, consider using a fence or netting to protect your garden or consult a Master Gardener for advice: [www.extension.umn.edu/master-gardener](http://www.extension.umn.edu/master-gardener).

### Edging



Inspect the edging every spring for damage, including edging that has lifted up from the freeze/thaw cycle. If the edging has lifted, remove a few inches of soil underneath and reinstall the edging.

The top of the edging must be flush with the grass to minimize damage during lawn mowing and to ensure that runoff from the lawn can enter the raingarden.

### Inlets and Erosion

As needed, clean out your raingarden inlet and catch basin by scooping out sediment, leaves and debris. Run water through drain tile to ensure there are no clogs. If you have downspouts emptying directly into your raingarden, consider adding rocks below the downspout to prevent erosion.

If erosion causes a channel in the bottom of your raingarden, regrade so that the bottom of the garden is flat. You may also need to add rocks near the inlet to spread out the water as it enters your raingarden. If your garden begins to erode on a side slope, regrade so that the slope is no more than 3:1 grade or install a small retaining wall.

## Gardening Tips



### Deadheading:

Dead-heading is the removal of declining flowers from a plant. Dead-head select plants (such as salvia and nepeta) in your raingarden to encourage more flowers and a longer bloom time and to prevent seed aggressive plants from spreading quickly. Dead-heading also makes plants appear tidier.

### Tidying Up:

Consider cleaning up your garden by removing dead flower stalks and grass to allow for new growth. You can provide visual interest during the winter (and a seed source for birds) if you leave dead flowers standing in the fall and do your cleaning in the spring.

### Pruning:

By year three, many of the plants in your raingarden will be growing vigorously. Pruning back a shrub during the fall will help it to thicken and grow more flowering shoots in the spring.

Prune shrubs to: (1) remove dead, diseased, or injured branches; (2) remove crossing or rubbing branches; (3) remove branches growing towards the center of the shrub; and (4) rejuvenate the plant.

### Dividing & Removing Perennials:

As your garden ages, the perennials will grow large and may become crowded. You may need to remove plants or divide plants. Removing or dividing perennials is best in early spring before the plants are four inches tall. To divide them, dig up the whole plant with a spade, cut the plant into sections (each section with roots still attached) and replant.



PLANTING FOR CLEAN WATER®

Blue Thumb is a Minnesota-based partnership of more than 75 organizations working cooperatively to promote native plants, raingardens, and shoreline plantings to keep our water clean.



? Learn more about raingardens at  
[www.BlueThumb.org](http://www.BlueThumb.org)

# Raingardens

## Basic Maintenance



Photos from Washington Conservation District