



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

Young, establishing plants need one inch of water per week. After planting, the plants should receive water at least two times per week for the next four weeks. Additional watering may be needed during times of extreme heat.

It is best to water around the base of each plant using a hose (with light water pressure) or watering pot. This may be the most time consuming; however, it is best for the plant, keeps foliage dry, helps prevent disease, and reduces water usage. If you choose to use a sprinkler, much of the water will be lost, plants will not be evenly watered, foliage may not dry and plants will be more susceptible to disease. If you do decide to use a sprinkler, water in the morning.

During the second year, the plants will require supplemental watering during weeks without significant rainfall.

By the third year, the garden should be well established and will only need watering occasionally, depending on rainfall amounts.

Every year, you will need to ensure that your plants have adequate moisture well into the fall so that they have a healthy spring emergence.



Weeding

Plants compete with each other for nutrients, light, water, and space. Weeds, when given a chance, will almost always win. The easiest thing you can do to keep weeds out is to maintain mulch and perform light weeding at least twice a year.

Typical weeding periods are in the spring (normally late May) and in the fall (normally early August).

Spring weeding: When dandelions turn yellow for the first time, it is a good indicator that many other weeds are flowering as well. Weeding during this time is critical to keep the weeds from becoming established.

Fall weeding: Warm season weeds typically begin to grow rapidly and flower during early to mid-August. Weeding before they go to seed will help to keep the weeds from spreading.

When weeding, try to disturb the soil as little as possible and re-cover bare soil with mulch to keep new weeds from seeding.

Mulch



Your raingarden should be covered with double shredded hardwood mulch. Double shredded hardwood mulch chips inter-lock and will not float when the raingarden fills with water, unlike flat, wafer-like wood chips. Hardwood mulch is also heartier than softwood mulch and therefore lasts longer.

The mulch in your garden should be three inches thick and should be kept two inches away from the base of the plants in order to promote air circulation and prevent disease.

As the plants in your raingarden mature they will take up more space and will crowd out the weeds, leaving less need for mulch.

You may need to replenish localized areas of shredded hardwood mulch in your garden every few years.



Gardening Tips



Deadheading:

Dead-heading is the removal of declining flowers from a plant with fingers, scissors or hand pruners. Dead-head plants in your raingarden to encourage more flowers and a longer bloom time. As an added benefit, dead-heading makes plants appear tidier.

Pinching:

Pinching is to cut or pinch young stems back a couple inches to just above a bud or leaf. Pinch plants in your raingarden to make them bushier and more compact, to delay blooming, or to encourage the plants to put more energy into root and shoot production rather than flowering.

Pruning:

By year three, many of the plants in your raingarden will be growing vigorously. Pruning back a plant 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 plant is 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.



Blue Thumb is a Minnesota-based partnership of more than 70 organizations working cooperatively to promote native plants, raingardens, and shoreline plantings to keep our water clean.



? Learn more about raingardens at
www.BlueThumb.org

Raingardens

Basic Maintenance



Photos from Washington Conservation District