

City of North St. Paul



Rainwater Garden Policy and Resident Guide



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Rainwater gardens are becoming more popular in residential and commercial areas. Property owners are beginning to understand their value not only as a way to reduce nutrients in surface water runoff, but also as pleasing landscapes. With the increasing knowledge of rain gardens and expanding use of them, the City Council with the assistance of the City's Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) has developed a policy outlining the process for the placement of rain gardens within City Right of Way (ROW) and the accompanying benefits. This policy and guide applies to all parcels in all zoning districts, subject to the qualifiers listed herein and compliance with all city zoning codes.

Due to the varying soil composition and parcel elevations within North St. Paul, not all parcels may be appropriate for a rainwater garden and therefore may not qualify for a Surface Water Utility fee reduction. Determination and approval of rainwater gardens in City ROW will be reviewed on a case by case basis. Only rainwater gardens approved and located within City ROW will qualify for the fee reduction. Rainwater gardens on private property will only qualify for the surface water reduction if it is designed to directly take water from a public impervious surface, such as a parking lot or street which serves the parcel; this does not include residential driveways.

Rainwater gardens are an effective tool for treating smaller quantities of storm water runoff. Rainwater gardens can vary in size, but the typical residential rainwater garden is 10 x 20 feet and about one foot deep. The size for rain gardens is generally determined by the immediate runoff area, and the amount of initial runoff that can be captured for a 1" rain during a 24-hour period. In order to ensure the rainwater garden achieves lasting benefits to the parcel and the City, the following is a step by step procedure to secure permission for approval and obtain a reduced surface water utility fee for the parcel.

- 1) Contact the Watershed District. Both the Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District and Valley Branch Watershed District offer financial and design assistance for the development of rainwater gardens (visit www.rwmwd.org, <http://vbwd.org/>). They also offer technical assistance with design, locations, and plant selection.
- 2) Have percolation test(s) completed on the desired location of where the rainwater garden is to be constructed. Rainwater gardens need to be designed to drain within 48 hours. If the infiltration rate is slow, the design needs to provide for less total volume of water or it may need an under drain. Instructions for an infiltration test can be found at www.bluethumb.org and this test can be performed by the homeowner.
- 3) Complete a ROW permit and provide a detailed plan of the proposed rain water garden including: rain water garden dimensions, species of plants, distances from back of curb, curb cut location and size, existing above and underground public and private utilities that may be impacted if any, and a letter from the homeowner stating how the maintenance of the rain water garden will be completed and by whom. Curb cuts shall be designed and installed per City specifications, for more

information contact the Community Development Department at 651-747-2407. The Watershed Districts require a maintenance agreement if you receive cost-share funds. The Watershed Districts and other Metro organizations (Blue Thumb, Metro Blooms) have guidance materials for design and maintenance (visit www.rwmwd.org, www.bluethumb.org, or www.metroblooms.org). The ROW permit must be completed by the person performing the work within the City ROW. All contractors completing work in the City of North St. Paul must be licensed and registered with the City.

- 4) Once approved by the City and installed, City staff will visit the site to ensure it has been constructed per the design.
- 5) An adjustment of Surface Water Utility Fee will be completed after the rain garden is completely installed and inspected by the City, resulting in a decrease of 35% of the fee, as long as the rain water garden is maintained and is functioning properly. The city defines maintenance and functioning properly as all non-approved vegetation being removed, water is being drained within 48 hours and no visible sediment is present.

In order to track rain gardens and assist with the maintenance, the City of North St. Paul will maintain a registration list of all rain water gardens within the City. Annually the City will prepare and mail a post-card to the parcel owners reminding them to perform maintenance to continue to receive the Surface Water Utility Fee reduction and overall function of the rain water garden. If rain water gardens are not maintained and stop performing as intended the City of North St. Paul may intervene to correct the problem and assess the cost of work back to the property owner.