MAINTENAINING YOUR RAIN GARDEN

University of Illinois Extension - Master Gardeners
Center For Neighborhood Technology - RainReady
OVERVIEW

- Check inflow and outflow regularly and clear away any debris
- Check from time to time to make sure it is draining properly
- Make sure a hard surface or crust hasn’t formed
- Maintain 2 to 4 inches of mulch
- Do not use inorganic fertilizers
- Remove weeds, don’t use pesticides to control them
BASIC MAINTENANCE

- Water after planting and during dry spells whenever the top 4 inches is dry—especially during the first two years after establishing your rain garden
- Maintain a 2 to 4 inch layer of organic mulch (ideally shredded hardwood)
- Keep weeded, especially in the first two years
- Remove dead plants and dead or unsightly growth; replace with healthy plants unless the dead plant had a fungus or other disease
- Don’t remove plants when dormant (early Spring)
SEASONAL MAINTENANCE

- Early Fall (September-October)
  - Check for erosion and excessive flooding during storms
  - Weed, and water during periods of drought or if soil is dry below 4 inches
  - Replant if necessary
  - Check pH and adjust if necessary (keep pH between 8 and 5)
SEASONAL MAINTENANCE

- **Early Winter (November-December)**
  - Replace mulch as needed
  - If excess fine sediment has accumulated, remove gently with a shovel without disturbing plants

- **Late Winter (January - February)**
  - Remove trash and debris
  - Don’t pile snow onto rain garden - but don’t remove snow that has fallen there;
  - Don’t use chemical ice melts near the inflow of the rain garden
SEASONAL MAINTENANCE

- **Spring (March-April-May)**
  - Remove dead plant parts; replace mulch if needed; thin or trim overcrowded plants
  - Check for erosion and excessive flooding during storms
  - Weed, water if dry, and replant if needed
  - Clear any gutters connected to the rain garden

- **Summer (June-July-August)**
  - Check for erosion and excessive flooding during storms
  - Weed weekly, water during periods of drought or if soil is dry below 4 inches
CORRECTING PROBLEMS

- If water stands for more than 24 hours, the rain garden is not draining properly. This can be corrected by a contractor.

- If you see gullying or other signs of erosion during and after rain, adding more stones to the inflow area, or more mulch, can slow down the inflow of water.
IDENTIFY AND CORRECT EROSION
WATER SHOULD COMPLETELY DRAIN IN 24 HOURS
WHAT’S A WEED

- In Illinois, remove
  - White clover
  - Purslane
  - Canadian thistle
  - Dandelion
  - Pigweed
  - Lambsquarters

- Chickweed
- Wild carrot/Queen Anne’s Lace
- Wild violet
- Annual bluegrass
- Crabgrass
- Nutsedge
- Ground ivy/Creepeing Charlie
WHITE CLOVER
CANADIAN THISTLE
DANDELION
LAMBSQUARTERS
CHICKWEED
WILD CARROT / QUEEN ANNE’S LACE
ANNUAL BLUEGRASS
CRABGRASS
GROUND IVY / CREEPING CHARLIE

Photo Credit: Frank Mayfield/Flickr, Creative Commons License
RESOURCES

- https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Pages/PlantListRainGarden.aspx