

# RiverSmart Maintenance Assistance Program

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Fall 2019

## MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST FOR RIVERSMART RAIN GARDENS

Rain gardens function by capturing and filtering stormwater that drains from your roof and other areas of the yard into your garden through a downspout extension or rain barrel overflow pipe. The rain garden is designed to hold water until it has slowly infiltrated the soil within 48 hours of a rain event. The following features of your rain garden should be monitored seasonally to ensure proper long term functionality. Contact RSMAP for more information about any of the checklist items below.

**The Bowl** - The bowl sits at the center of the rain garden where water collects and should be least 6" deep.

- *Maintenance Check #1:* Make sure the bowl of the garden is 6" deep. If it is not, clear out yard debris, extra mulch, or anything else besides the plants or plant roots that may be filling it.
- *Maintenance Check #2:* Test the soil inside the bowl for compaction. Compacted soil drains much more slowly than the porous soil that was included in your garden installation. This condition can occur over time and could be the result of hardened mulch, improper draining from the downspout, or excessive water flowing into the garden from the surrounding area. To correct compacted soil, work compost into the ground taking care not to disturb plants. If compaction is severe, it may require digging up portions of the existing garden and replacing the original bioretention soil mix and some of the plants. Please contact RSMAP if you need assistance determining the severity of soil compaction.

**The Berm** - The bowl is bordered by a berm, a raised strip of compacted ground that surrounds the downhill portion of your rain garden, which should be level with the upslope side. There is also an overflow area adjacent to the rain garden where excess water can flow over the berm without impacting sidewalks, driveways, buildings or neighboring properties.

- *Maintenance Check #3:* The berm for a standard garden should be 3"- 6" high, but taller berms may be necessary on steeper slopes. If it has deteriorated, you can rebuild with compacted soil using clay soil if possible.
- *Maintenance Check #4:* Make sure the overflow area is adequately sited and would not impact impervious surfaces, buildings, or neighboring properties.

**Outflow Point** - The outflow point is where the downspout extension from the roof drains into the rain garden. If you have a rain barrel, the outflow point is where the overflow pipe from the rain barrel empties into your garden.

- *Maintenance Check #5:* Make sure the the outflow point is clear of debris. Blockage in this area from leaves, soil, and other refuse can occur with a lot of heavy rain.
- *Maintenance Check #6:* There are stones placed underneath the outflow point to stabilize the soil and to disburse the flow of water, slowing and spreading it out. Secure and replace rocks as necessary without blocking the outflow point.