Monthly Stormwater Planner for Residents

of Hutchinson and Reno County

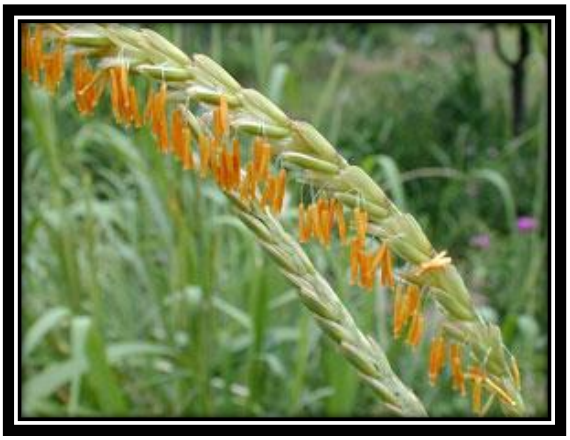
Homeowners are key to Community Stormwater Management!

In this article that are several simple, familiar year-round yard care practices that encourage the absorption of rainfall and water runoff into the soil in residential landscapes. **Why are they important?** These actions benefit your community by preventing flooding, soil erosion, and polluted runoff from reaching our waterways and threatening our streams, ecosystems, and eventually our drinking water. Individual residents can have a *huge impact*!

Seasonal Tips for Year Round Yard Care

MID TO LATE WINTER TIPS

January: Use safe deicers; avoid lawn compaction



Eastern Gamagrass, Mike Haddock, kswildflower.org

- Avoid or minimize using rock salt. Environmentally safer options include: Spreading sand, calcium magnesium acetate, magnesium chloride, or non-chloride deicing products.
- Take this time to evaluate your property to identify a corner of your property that could be converted to native grasses. The roots of native plants are usually 3 to 7 feet deep, enriching the soil and requiring less watering during summer months. They also absorb many times the amount of rainwater than turf grass keeping more of it on your property.
- When possible stay off your lawn to keep from compacting grass plants.

February: Test your soil

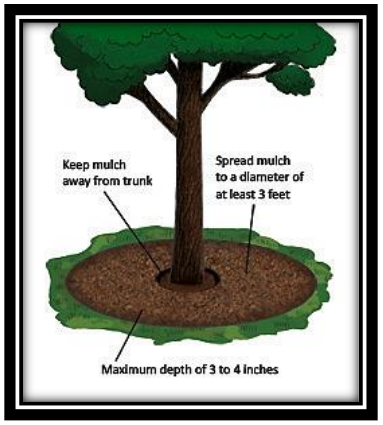
- Healthy soil leads to healthy turf which can absorb more rain. You can purchase soil test kits and many local retailers.
- Cut down the stalks of ornamental and native warm season grasses left over winter for bird habitats.

SPRING TIPS

March: Plant a large stature tree

- Trees and shrubs help control excess water in the yard. Their foliage and bark surfaces reduce runoff and erosion by intercepting rainfall, and their roots absorb rainfall. Their leaf canopies also reduce the force of rain hitting the soil, preventing erosion. Where possible plant a tall growing broad-leaf tree such as an oak, maple, or black gum. Large trees are great stormwater control. At maturity they intercept

over 1,000 gallons of rainwater each year. Avoid pruning tree crowns to allow full canopies to develop.



Proper mulching can help keep a tree healthy. (Sarah Cox, Purdue University)

April: Leave grass clippings; mulch properly

- Cut grass at 2½ to 3 inches tall. Mow often enough so that clippings are not longer than one-third (⅓) of the grass blade, so they can decompose easily into the soil.
- Excess nitrogen and phosphorus from lawn fertilization is frequently a pollutant to streams, fostering the growth of algae which deplete oxygen levels, harming fish.
- Mulched beds trap and infiltrate more rainwater than a lawn or bare soil. Spread out any excess mulch away from trees and shrubs, making sure the tree's "flare" is exposed, and allowing it to decompose. Never spread fresh woodchips around trees or shrubs; their decomposition will harm plants.

Visitation Church Rain Garden in Kansas

May: Replace some turf with mulched beds, a rain garden, or pocket meadow

- Create new areas in the yard that will absorb roof water from downspouts, runoff from paved areas, and puddles in compacted soil areas. Start a flower or vegetable path, build a bog or rain garden to absorb rainwater. Mulch all bare soil in planted beds and under trees and shrubs with composted leaf mulch.
- Learn more about rain gardening and yard wastes.

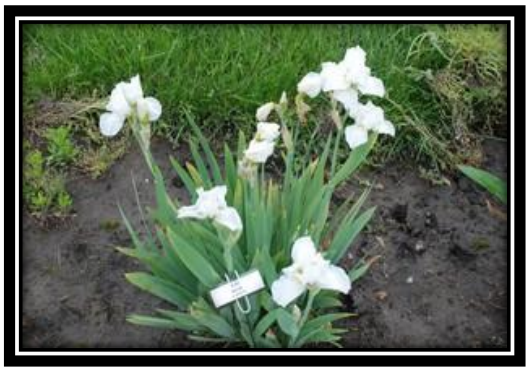
SUMMER TIPS

June: Raise mower height; judiciously control weeds and pests

- Raise your mower height to 3 inches for summer months. Taller grass grows deeper roots, shades and protects the soil, is less prone to disease, pests, and weeds, and captures more excess rainwater on the property.
- Late May or early June is a good time to spread biological controls on your lawn or garden, such as beneficial nematodes to control Japanese beetle grubs. Avoid use of chemical pesticides and herbicides if possible,

they damage beneficial insects and soil structures. If weed problems develop, spot treat specific weed patches rather than treating entire lawn or garden.

- Leave a minimum of a 3 foot un-mowed edge along streams, ponds, and drainage channels.

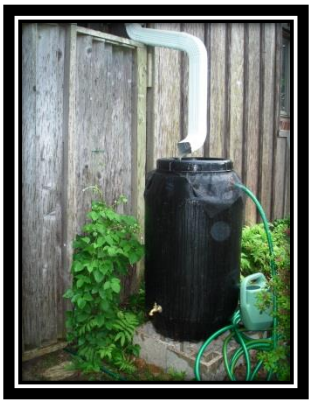


Bama Baby, prairiestarflowers.com

July: Plant flowering plants; attract beneficial predators

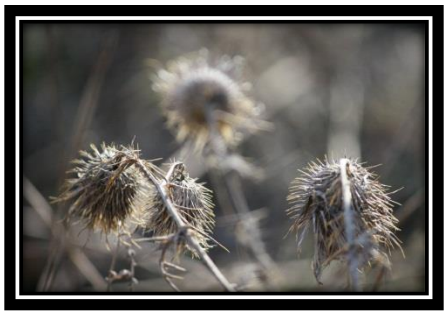
- Plants of all kinds help reduce stormwater runoff from residential properties. Their roots absorb water and break up and aerate the soil as they grow.
- Flowering native perennials will attract beneficial predators and pollinator birds, butterflies, and other insects. Perennials also develop extensive root systems to hold and enrich the soil. Monitor plants for pests and control them with environmentally friendly applications.

August: Redirect roof runoff; install pervious surfaces



- Consider landscape modifications to help your yard retain excess rainwater and prevent runoff. Redirect all downspouts which drain onto paved surfaces and storm sewers to flow into a rain barrel, rain garden, mulched bed or grassy area, located downgrade from your house.
- Minimize impervious surfaces such as asphalt and concrete walks, patios, and driveways on your property. Replace them with gravel or pervious blocks or pavers that allow rain and excess water runoff to soak into the soil.

FALL TIPS



September: Renovate or overseed your lawn; use slow release fertilizer

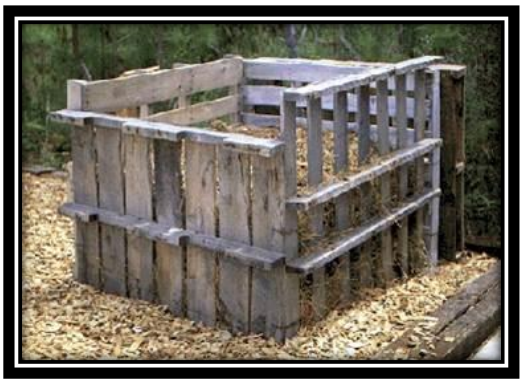
- Labor Day signals the best time of year to renovate your lawn. Core aerate, then overseed a closely mowed lawn with seed mixture and spread slow-acting, organic fertilizer. Slow-release fertilizers are less water soluble and therefore less polluting to streams. Less compacted soil absorbs more rainwater

October: Plant trees in your yard and community

- Fall is the best time for planting most trees and shrubs. The more trees and shrubs on your property, the more stormwater is controlled in your community. Consider volunteering to plant trees in your community.

- Leave faded blossoms on perennials to mature into seedheads to support birds and other wildlife over the winter.
- Spread lime if the soil test indicates soil is too acidic for turf grass.

November: Harvest fallen leaves



- Start a compost pile with fallen leaves. Mix in non-meal kitchen scraps or other "green" organic matter. Compost can be used next year to condition your soil so that it can absorb more rain water. Mow last, light leaf fall with a mulching mower if possible and leave the fragments in the lawn as mulch for grass plants.
- Fertilize late fall with a slow-release, organic fertilizer to encourage root development, which will create healthier, more resilient lawn next year.

December: Winterize rain barrel; relax

- Take a well-earned break from yard work. Disconnect hoses from your rain barrel and store hoses to avoid damage from freezing. As the wintry mix of snow and rain events come along, monitor the melt runoff and see where more improvements might be made next year to keep the water on the property. Your neighbors will thank you and your community will benefit from reduced flooding, safer water, cleaner streams and a healthier environment.

CITY OF HUTCHINSON
STORMWATER UTILITY

For more information contact:
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