



Rain Garden Care

BASIN CARE

SEDIMENT TRAP

Check for debris after each large rain event, and clear out sediment after each rainy season. Put material cleared out of the trap in the trash. If there are no basins immediately downstream of your basin you could put the sediment in the street on the downstream side of the curb cut.

ROCK ARMOR

While the basins are new, inspect rock armoring after each rain event to be sure flowing water hasn't displaced any rocks. Mend as necessary. In subsequent years, you may need to adjust seasonally or less.

MULCH

The mulch may last a few years. Mulch is key to keeping the soil moist, cool, weed-free, and improving nutrients to the soil. Replenish mulch as needed to maintain a 2-inch layer. (Fairfax Companies is a great place to get mulch.) Avoid using decorative, colored wood chips.

Some of the wood mulch tends to float when there is water in the basin. Pull mulch away from tree trunks after each rain event to prevent rotting of the trunk. If your mulch is washing away during big storms you may need taller rocks in your sediment trap to act as a check dam.

TRASH

Collect and dispose of trash as often as possible (checking every day would be optimal). We want our basins looking nice so that other people see them and are encouraged to do similar projects in their own yards.

PLANT CARE

WATERING

Initial Plant Establishment (for plants planted in the fall)

Water trees every 3 days for the first month. Water once per week through the rest of the winter months. Try to offer at least 10 gallons for your new tree at each watering.

Water shrubs every other day for the first 2 weeks. Water twice per week through the rest of the winter months. Try to offer at least 2 gallons for your new shrub at each watering.

Adjust watering schedule based on temperatures and rainfall events.

Long Term Irrigation

For the first year, check DRiWATER every three months and replace with new cartons if necessary.

Continue to water trees once per week through the first summer. Water once or twice per month through the second winter, depending on rainfall.

Continue to water shrubs twice per week through the first summer. Decrease watering frequency to once per week through the second winter.

As we enter the second summer, observe your plants and assess plant establishment. Adjust watering schedule according to temperatures and rainfall. The goal is to gradually decrease irrigation frequency to the point that the plants mostly rely on rainfall but may require a bit of supplemental irrigation during particularly hot and/or dry times of the year.

PRUNING

Avoid pruning trees for the first two years. After that establishment time period, prune only what is necessary to keep plants out of roadways and walkways. If you haven't already done so, consider reviewing the Tucson Clean & Beautiful pruning guide before heading out with your loppers

([https://tucsoncleanandbeautiful.org/trees-for-tucson/information-resources/planting-maintenance-education/#How%20should I prune my tree?](https://tucsoncleanandbeautiful.org/trees-for-tucson/information-resources/planting-maintenance-education/#How%20should%20I%20prune%20my%20tree?)). *Poor pruning practices can negatively affect the health of your plants.* If you need help pruning, reach out to others on the Green Team who have pruning experience.

If you chop up the branches you've trimmed off into small chunks, you can add it as mulch to your basin.

Ideally the shrubs that have been planted in the basins will not need any pruning at all.

We want to avoid over-pruning our plants; shrubs help crowd out weeds, and extra low hanging tree branches create a shaded environment that discourages some invasive weeds, such as buffelgrass.

WEEDING

It's easier to maintain weed populations if maintenance is performed often, before a huge population takes hold and seems like an overwhelming task to tackle. Pay particular attention in the days and weeks following rain events, when you're likely to see new germination and rapid growth.

If weeds are pulled before going to seed they can be added to the bottom of the basin as mulch. One major exception is burmudagrass. Even if it hasn't gone to seed, it should not be added to the basin because even short sections of the plant can root and re-establish. Burmuda should be thrown in the trash or fed to your pet rabbits. The best way to manage burmuda is to dig it out, taking as much of the root as possible. It is not advisable to use a weed wacker on it near the basins because pieces that can re-root are likely to end up in the basin, which is exactly where we don't want it.

When you put on your weeding gloves, remember that not all volunteer plants are weeds. A mix of native seeds have been spread in the basins, so hopefully we will start to see a variety of native shrubs, flowers, and grasses germinating and establishing a presence in our basins, adding to the richness of the habitat we are trying to create. You may see an increase of birds in the shrubs, butterflies on the flowers, and lizards in the rocks. The native grasses are desirable because they help water percolate deeper into the soil and they keep fine sediments from clogging the basin. Be sure that what you are pulling out is actually an undesirable plant. If you are unsure about a particular plant; ask a neighbor, post a photo of it to the listerv or facebook page, or do a google search before pulling it out.

Remember: *Observation is the key to successful maintenance of your rain garden (or any landscape for that matter).* These are general guidelines to get you started, but always defer to your own observations; for example, if it's watering day and the soil still looks wet, hold off for another day and check again.

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