

## Rain gardens and rain barrels keep rivers and lakes clean

By KEVIN STRAUSS Guest Columnist

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A "just planted" and "mature" rain garden. Rain gardens like this beautify your lawn and help clean and soak up rainwater

**N**ormally when we talk about keeping stormwater (the rain that lands in cities and towns) clean, we talk about keep grass clippings and fertilizers off of the pavement, and picking up after your dog. These clean water actions are important. But today we're going to talk about capturing stormwater, so it can't carry fertilizer and sediment pollution into the Cannon River.

The more stormwater that flows across our yards and driveways, the more fertilizer and sediment that rainwater will carry to the Cannon River. So, capturing some of that stormwater, and letting it soak into the ground can reduce runoff pollution from your neighborhood. What's more, as that stormwater soaks into the ground, the fertilizer and sediment pollution that it was carrying ends up fertilizing and adding soil to your lawn, all for free.

### **What is a rain garden?**

A rain garden is a planting of native, deep-rooted prairie flowers and grasses in a slight depression in your yard. The garden is designed to capture stormwater and let it soak into the soil over the next 24 hours. The City of Northfield has a rain garden rebate program. You can get a rebate of up to \$250 after you install a rain garden. To learn more, Google "Northfield Rain Garden Rebate."

If you want to learn more about rain gardens, join Clean River Partners and City of Northfield staff to learn how to plant your own rain garden on Thursday, March 17, 2022, 6-9 pm at Northfield High School.

To Register, go to [CleanRiverPartners.org](https://CleanRiverPartners.org), or visit the Northfield Community Education website and search for "Plant a Rain Garden."

At this workshop, you'll learn about the benefits of rain gardens and how to plan and install your own rain garden. You'll learn where to put a rain garden, how to choose the right plants, and what city and county cost-share programs exist to help you pay for the rain garden. The City of Northfield and Dakota County SWCD will reimburse homeowners for part of the cost of installing a rain garden.

### **Native plant rebate program**

Not sure you're ready to plant a rain garden? Then consider planting native grasses and flowers in your yard. Once established, they take less work than lawn grass. They are deep-rooted, so they don't need to be watered. And they're beautiful. Planting native prairie flowers and grasses increases how permeable your lawn soil will be, allowing it to absorb more rainfall. The City of Northfield has a native planting rebate program for native plantings. You can get a rebate of up to \$75 for qualified plantings. To learn more, Google "Northfield Native Plant Rebate."

### **What is a rain barrel?**

A rain barrel is a barrel attached to the rain downspout that captures rainwater before it flows out into your lawn or pavement. Most rain barrels have a spigot at the bottom that you can use to fill a watering can to water flower gardens.

By capturing rainwater, less of that water flows across lawns or pavement to carry grass clippings, oil, sediment, or other pollutants into the Cannon River.

The city of Northfield has a rain barrel rebate program. You can get a rebate of \$20. To learn more, Google "Northfield Rain Barrel Rebate."

### **Adopt a catch basin**

Want to do more to keep stormwater clean in Northfield? Then Adopt-A-Catch-Basin (also known as a storm drain) in your neighborhood. Volunteers agree to clean leaves and litter out of the drain a few times a year. To learn more, Google "Northfield Adopt A Catch Basin."

### **Illegal discharges into storm drains**

While most people in Northfield do a good job following the rules about how to keep our stormwater and river clean, occasionally someone has other ideas. From time to time, you might notice something besides clean rain water flowing into a storm drain.

Residents have tried to dispose of liquids illegally in a city storm drain. According to Northfield Water Quality Technician Cole Johnson, rainwater is the only thing that should be going down a storm drain.

So, if you see someone disposing of paint, oil, or any other non-rainwater liquid down a storm drain, please call the city to report the violation. To report an Illicit Discharge during normal working hours (7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. M-F) call the city's water quality technician, Cole Johnson, at 507-645-3071. To report an illicit discharge after hours or on weekends, call the non-emergency Northfield Police Number 507-645-4477.

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