

# Rain Garden

## Maintenance Cheat Sheet



	Winter January-March	Spring April-June	Summer July-September	Fall October-December
Water			●	
Mulch				●
Maintain Drainage	●			●
Weed		●	●	

This table represents the **most critical times** to perform maintenance. However, you can do any of these tasks year-round as needed.

### Watering

Young plants need water to grow strong roots. **Watering is important during the first 2 to 3 summers** after your rain garden has been installed. In general, water when the weather is dry and warm, from May through September. Water in the morning to reduce evaporation. Water deeply, moistening the top 6-12 inches of soil.

#### How Often Should I Water?

First summer	Every 3-4 days
Second summer	Once every 2 weeks
Third summer	Once a month
Fourth summer and beyond	Not at all, or minimally as needed (watch for signs of drought stress)

### Maintaining Drainage

**Inspect your garden regularly. Remove any built up soil, mulch, sand, or gravel that blocks the inlets or outlets,** or mounds that prevent water flow through the rain gardens. Leaves, garbage and other debris can block the inlets, and can cause backups or flooding. Cut back or remove any vegetation or grass that is growing into your inlets.

### Mulching

Mulch prevents weeds from growing, conserves water, and protects plant roots. Add mulch as necessary to **maintain a mulch layer 3 inches deep.** Cover areas of exposed soil with mulch when needed. Avoid piling mulch up against plant stems.

Do NOT use “beauty bark” as it is low in soil nutrients and will not help retain water. The recommended mulch in a rain garden is arborist wood chips, available at no cost from many tree services.

### Weeding

Weeds can choke young plants and spread quickly. Pull weeds by hand or with a long-handled weed puller. **Pull the entire weed**—roots and all—so that it doesn't immediately grow back.

**Never use herbicides/pesticides** in your rain garden.

Weed as necessary year-round, especially in late winter, spring, and early fall when the soil is moist.

#### SOURCES

- “Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington”
- “Rain Garden Care” (700 Million Gallons)
- “Rain Garden and Cistern Maintenance Guide” (12,000 Rain Gardens)

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