



Metro / Minneapolis Blooms

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**2007 Rain Garden Workshops – Available for the first time in the West
Metro communities of Crystal, Golden Valley, Hopkins, Minnetonka,
Plymouth, Robbinsdale, St. Louis Park and Wayzata**

March 8, 2007, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Eight new communities have agreed to host Rain Garden Workshops made popular in Minneapolis in the past two years by Metro/Minneapolis Blooms. The Rain Garden Program will be made available to at least 750 residents or more from these communities, and is sponsored by Hennepin County Environmental Services, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, in collaboration the cities in which workshops are being held, and the generous parks and churches that have donated space. The Rain Garden Workshops Program brings together a widely respected rain garden ecologist, trained landscape design and horticultural resource staff, Master Gardeners, a program of individual coaching, on-site consultations, cash match reimbursement grants, and special native plant sales.

This new partnership between eight cities and the Metro Blooms Rain Garden Workshop Program works because the installation of rain gardens achieves local public policy goals of city public works and environmental departments – to reduce stormwater runoff – with Metro Blooms experience as a gardening educator. When residents install rain gardens they help their communities to reduce stormwater runoff flows and limit the pollution draining into our creeks, streams, rivers and lakes, and they beautify their neighborhoods.

The five-part workshop program teaches homeowners and businesses about how to design and plant rain gardens; and to use our Minnesota native plants to beautify our neighborhoods and communities to attract birds and butterflies. The program offers landowners 1) a rain garden education, 2) the technical and design support both in the classroom and 3) on site, 4) sources for the native plants needed and 5) a cash reimbursement grant for native plants, providing an incentive to a homeowner to install a rain garden in one planting season. Rain gardens allow rain and melting snow to seep naturally into the ground. This helps recharge aquifers and keeps contaminated water out of the watershed, helps landowners limit the amount of water needed for watering, and reduces water bills.

Rain Garden Educational Workshops (Part As) offer a comprehensive presentation by nationally recognized rain garden expert Rusty Schmidt. This workshop offers homeowners materials on how to install a rain garden with native plants that thrive without fertilizers or pesticides. Part A Workshops give homeowners and businesses everything needed to make a plan for own yard or site. A schedule of west Metro Workshops are attached.

Later follow-up **Coaching Seminars** (Part Bs) are offered. In these small group sessions, homeowners bring site-specific questions and rain garden plans for review by *Landscape Design Assistants* and *Hennepin County Master Gardeners*. Participants get individualized advice on site plans about the plants that will thrive in special growing conditions -- shade or sun, clay or sandy soil.

Each workshop session costs \$15. However, if the homeowner meets certain application requirements most will qualify for a **\$65 Native Plant and Installation Reimbursement Grants** available on a first-come, first-served basis. The Native Plant Grant Reimbursement program has been made available by the Hennepin County NRICH (Natural Resources Incentives for Critical Habitat) Program. In addition, this year special Native Plant Sale is being offered at Courage Center on June 30th to provide a source of Minnesota grown native plants for program participants.

Finally, **On-site Consultations** for Workshop Participants (only) are available from Metro Blooms Landscape Design Assistants at a very low cost. LDAs may be scheduled after April 15 to visit a home or business owner on-site to offer one hour of professional landscaping advice on siting, drainage flows, planting plants, plant choices, and any other questions a new rain gardener may have. Residents of these cities can sign up online to help our limited staff at www.MetroBlooms.org for the Rain Garden Workshop (Part A) of one's choice from the list attached. Space will be limited and workshops have filled up quickly in the past. Registrations for Part B workshops are available to those who have completed Part A, and retain their ticket number.

To register by mail, registrants can send a \$15 check or money order for each workshop (payable to Metro Blooms) and send to Pat Gill, Co-Chair, Metro/Minneapolis Blooms Committee of the Friends of CUE, City Hall, Room 210, 350 S. 5th St., Minneapolis, MN 55415. Be sure to include the Workshop A Number preferred (#1 – #10) with a name, address, zip code, phone prefix and number and e-mail.

For further local and partner information contact:

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