

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

BACKGROUND

In 2006 the Shingle Creek and West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission's Education and Public Outreach Committee (EPOC) invited the Education Committee of the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission to partner in developing joint education and outreach activities. Since that time this voluntary partnership has grown to include the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission, the Three Rivers Park District, Hennepin County Department of Environment and Energy, and the Freshwater Society. The WMOs are designated as "members," the latter three organizations as "partners."

This alliance, the West Metro Water Alliance (WMWA), grew from a recognition that the individual organizations have many common education and public outreach goals and messages that could be more efficiently and effectively addressed and delivered collaboratively and on a wider scale.

MEETINGS

WMWA meets monthly, as needed, on the second Tuesday, at Plymouth City Hall. Member representatives include Laura Jester, Administrator, Bassett Creek WMC; Doug Baines, Dayton, Elm Creek WMC; Catherine Cesnik, Plymouth, Elm Creek WMC; and Shelley Marsh, Brooklyn Center, and Ben Scharenbroich, Plymouth, Shingle Creek, Elm Creek and West Mississippi WMCs. Partner attendees have included Denis Hahn, Three Rivers Park District; and Mary Karius, Hennepin County. Other attendees include Mary Anderson, Sharon Meister, and Tracy Leavenworth, Watershed PREP Educators; Dawn Pape, Lawn Chair Gardener; and Michaela Neu, Mississippi WMO. Diane Spector, Wenck Associates, serves as technical support for WMWA, and Amy Juntunen, JASS, serves as administrative support. In 2017 nine meetings were held. All WMWA member Commissioners and city staff are welcome to attend meetings.

THE WMWA PROGRAM

Goals of the WMWA program are to:

- Inform public about the watershed organizations and their programs.
- Provide useful information to public on priority topics.
- Engage public and encourage positive, water-friendly behaviors.

Three informational pieces have been developed by WMWA to support these goals. The *10 Things You Can Do* Brochure targets the general public. The brochure is distributed at all venues where the Commissions or member cities have a presence and also in the Watershed PREP classrooms. It is also available on the websites of the WMO member cities.

The *Maintain Your Property the Watershed Friendly Way* handbook targets small businesses, multi-family housing properties, and common interest communities such as homeowners' associations. It contains tips for specifying and hiring turf and snow maintenance contractors, and includes checklists for BMP inspections.

The *Residential Snow and Ice Care* brochure is an educational piece designed to inform citizens of the chloride pollution problem and ways to reduce salt use.

WATERSHED PREP

Watershed PREP is a program of WMWA and stands for Protection, Restoration, Education, and Prevention. 2017 was the fifth year of the program. Two contract educators with science education backgrounds are shared between the member watersheds. The focus of the program is two-fold - to present water resource-based classes to fourth grade students and to provide education and outreach to citizens, lake associations, other civic organizations, youth groups, etc. Goals of the program are 1) to have audiences gain a general understanding of watersheds, water resources and the organizations that manage them, and 2) to have audiences understand the connection between actions and water quality and water quantity. The ultimate goal is to make this program available to all fourth graders in the four WMWA watersheds and to other schools as contracted.

Fourth Grade Program. Three individual lessons meeting State education standards have been developed. **Lesson 1**, *What is a Watershed and Why do we care?*, provides an overview of the watershed concept and is specific to each school's watershed. It describes threats to the watershed. **Lesson 2**, *Water Cycle - More than 2-dimensional!*, describes the movement and status of water as it travels through the water cycle. **Lesson 3**, *Stormwater Walk*, investigates movement of surface water on school grounds.



In 2017, 163 classes totaling 4,430 students attended lessons 1 and 2 (compared to 127 and 3,374, respectively in 2016, compared to 149 and 4,042, respectively in 2015, compared to 78 and 1,373, respectively, in 2014, and 37 and 931, respectively, in 2013.) *Appendix A* details the students reached in lessons 1 and 2.

Community Education and Outreach. The PREP educators also provided outreach at five school and community water-related events using the large model watershed "Enviroscape" for runoff education. Outreach activities are also described in *Appendix A*.

UPDATED WORK PLAN

In 2015 the WMWA Work Plan was updated to reflect current practices. The updated Work Plan identified the following activities:

1. Facilitate information availability and sharing.
2. Reschedule professional opinion survey to measure knowledge and attitudes about water resources to 2019.
3. Provide Coordinated Communication, Media Relations, and Information Sharing that more closely parallel what the NPDES Permit education and public outreach minimum measure require. Components include identifying priority issues every year, developing a communications plan that identifies educational goals by stakeholder, establishing measurable goals, and identifying responsible parties.
4. Develop county-wide or regional activities. (At this time WMWA does not have the capacity to undertake these activities.)
5. Pursue and obtain funding for education and public outreach activities.
6. Support and expand in scope and reach the Watershed PREP program.

WMWA's 2017 and 2018 budgets reflect these activities and were approved by the members on March 8, 2016 and April 11, 2017, respectively. The budgets are included in this report as *Appendix C*.

SPECIAL PROJECT

At WMWA's request, Metro Blooms/Blue Thumb submitted a proposal for a project that would encourage residents to replace impervious surface and turf grass with native plantings to benefit clean water by reducing stormwater runoff. The project includes the additional benefit of creating habitat for pollinators. An agreement between Metro Blooms and the Shingle Creek Commission, as fiscal agent for WMWA, to move the project forward was approved.

Phase one of the project began with creation of a name, tag line and logo. The project was promoted in the Blue Thumb space at the State Fair where the public voted to name the campaign, *Pledge to Plant for Pollinators and Clean Water*.

Phase two included a roll out of the *Pledge* campaign on the Metro Blooms and WMWA websites where citizens can enter the square footage of their new plantings, creation of a *Pledge to Plant* banner for events, and a social media campaign that began in May 2016. The Campaign was promoted at the State Fair and other area events in 2016 and 2017.

In 2017, 321 people submitted the Pledge online covering over 376 acres compared to approximately 250 pledges for 25 acres in 2016, although several submissions did not specify an area to be planted, so it may be more. The total includes a few larger prairie restoration projects but the median pledge covers 200 square feet. Most of the pledges come from the metro area, but pledges have been received from 17 other states: Arkansas, California, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.



RESILIENT YARD WORKSHOPS

In 2017, four Resilient Yard workshops, hosted by WMWA member cities and presented by Metro Blooms were held. Workshops took place in Plymouth, Champlin, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park. Attendees learned about raingardens, native plantings, and turf alternatives or "bee lawns" and other practices, like stormwater recapture and reuse with rain barrels, diversion of downspouts away from impervious surfaces, and use of pervious pavers for driveways and patios. Combined attendance at those three workshops was 123, and 42 additional WMWA area residents attended the same workshop in other cities, for a total of 165.

Sherman Associates, owners of Autumn Ridge Apartments in Brooklyn Park, have agreed to a 2018 budget and workplan which includes the design and installation of five raingardens, a permeable pavement system, a large native planting at the corner of the property and a new playground, pending application and receipt of grant funding from Hennepin County and the Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission. As a result of this Agreement, the Brooklyn Park Resilient Yard workshop was held at the Autumn Ridge site, followed by a public information event and picnic attended by 150 residents.

Surveys were sent by Metro Blooms shortly after the workshop and again at year-end with the following results:

Post-Workshop Survey

- 88% of respondents indicated they were likely or very likely to install native plants in their yard this year.
- 66% indicated they were likely or very likely to install a “bee lawn” in their yard this year.
- 58% indicated they were likely or very likely to install a raingarden in their yard in the next two years (many of the respondents who were unlikely noted they already had at least one).
- “Bee lawns” and turf alternatives in general were the clear favorite topics—the next workshop series will definitely include more information about these.
- 95%+ rated the workshop experience, the presenters, and the information presented “above average” or “excellent”.

Year-End Survey

- 24% of respondents have installed or are working on installing raingardens since the workshop.
- Another 36% plan to do so in the future (and 24% already had at least one raingarden before the workshop).
- 30% installed or began installing turf alternatives (on an average of 20-30% of their yards)
- Another 38% plan to do so in the future.

Other practices attendees adopted after the workshop include:

- Keeping leaves and grass clippings out of the street and storm drain (24%)
- Redirecting downspouts to a planted area (20%)
- Cleaning debris from a nearby storm drain (13%)
- Adjusting use of salt/sand for de-icing (11%)

Interestingly, whereas decreasing runoff was the number one reason people installed raingardens, reducing dependence on irrigation, fertilizing and mowing was the primary motivation for people to install turf alternatives. The #2 and #3 motives for either practice remain the same though: respectively, creating habitat for pollinators and beautifying their property.

WMWA WEBSITE

A new website, www.westmetrowateralliance.org, went live in January 2016. The website serves as a repository for documents and information for access by member cities and citizens, lists local events WMWA is participating in and/or otherwise promoting, stores Watershed PREP information for schools, and collects information for the *Pledge to Plant* campaign and newsletter subscriptions.

The website had 581 unique visitors engaged in 750 individual sessions with an average of 2.31 pages viewed per session for a total of 1,733 page views on the website in 2017. The website metrics can be found in Appendix B

2017 MARKETING ACTIVITY

Water Links. The members and their partners contribute to the WMWA eNewsletter *Water Links*, which is published by the Hennepin County Department of Environment and Energy to a subscriber list of 2,200. Three issues were published in 2017. Articles included seasonal topics such as Environmentally Friendly Lawn Care, Managing Fall Yard Waste, and Snow and Ice control, as well as watershed project updates such as carp tracking and removal, new project installations, research on iron and bio-char enhanced sand filters, creek restorations, and agricultural improvements, promotion of the *Pledge to Plant* campaign and Watershed PREP program, and city and watershed events.

Seed Packets. One of the priority messages in 2017 was the role of native vegetation in improving stormwater infiltration and reducing other negative environmental impacts. To help promote this message, WMWA and the member Commissions handed out 400 packets of native seeds at community events. A short educational message was printed on the seed packets.



Plymouth Home Expo. Bassett Creek, Shingle Creek, and Elm Creek booths were combined into a large area and included a WMWA focus area at the 2017 Expo, April 7 and 8. There were over 100 direct contacts at the booths. Several handouts were available from Bassett Creek, Shingle Creek, and Elm Creek including seed packets, raingarden design booklets, planting in clay soils guides, Pledge to Plant flyers and the *10 Things* and *Smart Salting* brochures. In addition, Bassett Creek handed out branded dog waste bag dispensers and watershed maps. The Expo also featured the Blue Thumb pull-out roots display and banner, as well as an interactive pollutant display from

WaterShed Partners.

Social Media. In May 2016 WMWA contracted with Dawn Pape, Lawn Chair Gardener, LLC, to create a social media campaign for the Pledge to Plant campaign and WMWA in general on Facebook and Twitter. As of December 31, 2017, the WMWA Facebook page had 119 likes and the Twitter page had 92 followers. The most well-received posts had a reach of 1,982 and over 500 engagements. There were 72 tweets and 152 facebook posts by the WMWA accounts in 2017.

To learn more about WMWA, contact:

*Diane Spector, Wenck Associates, 763.479.4280, dspector@wenck.com
or Amy Juntunen, JASS, 763.553.1144, amy@jass.biz*

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A – WATERSHED PREP / EDUCATOR ACTIVITY

Table 1. 2017 Community education and outreach participation

Date	Event	City	Participants
3/4	Basswood Science Night	Maple Grove	Elm Creek
4/8	Plymouth Expo	Plymouth	BC, SC, EC
10/5	Sonnesyn Field Trip-Raingardens	New Hope	Bassett
8/8	Plymouth Kids Fest	Plymouth	BC, SC, EC
10/17	New Hope City Days	New Hope	Shingle

Community Education and Outreach. The PREP educators provided outreach at five community and school events. Because of the nature of these events, it is difficult to keep a tally of the number of contacts made and citizens engaged. One of the largest of these events is the Plymouth Home Expo. WMWA and its four WMOs staff adjoining booths to do combined outreach to the 1,000+ visitors to the Expo.

Table 2. Watershed PREP Program participation growth.

Year	# Classrooms	# Students	# and Type of Schools
<i>Lesson 1</i>			
2013	63	1,679	13 in six districts; one charter school; one parochial school
2014	116	3,469	30 in seven districts; one magnet school; one parochial school
2015	122	3,183	36 in nine districts; two charter schools; five parochial schools
2016	107	2,850	29 in seven districts, one charter school, 5 parochial schools
2017	125	3358	12 in seven districts, one charter school, one parochial school
<i>Lesson 2</i>			
2013	14	390	Three in three districts; one charter school; one parochial school
2014	22	645	Five in three districts
2015	27	859	Six in five districts
2016	20	524	Five in three districts, one parochial school
2017	38	1,072	Seven in three districts, one parochial school

*Includes eight classrooms in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District paid for by others.

APPENDIX A – WATERSHED PREP / EDUCATOR ACTIVITY

Table 1. 2017 schools and students participating in Lesson 1: What is a Watershed?

	Date	School	School District	City	Watershed	Classes	Students
1	1/10	Hassan	Elk River	Rogers	Elm	8	220
2	1/12	Jackson MS (8th gr.) Expert	Anoka-Hennepin	Champlin	W. Miss	2	51
3	1/31	Zanewood Elementary	Osseo	Brooklyn Park	Shingle	3	65
4	2/17	Forest Elementary	Robbinsdale	Crystal	Shingle	4	102
5	2/21	Noble Academy	Charter	Brooklyn Park	W. Miss	2	48
6	3/7	Kimberly Lane	Wayzata	Plymouth	Bassett	4	112
7	3/8	Sunset Hill	Wayzata	Plymouth	Bassett	4	111
8	3/23	Oakwood	Wayzata	Plymouth	Minnehaha	4	109
9	3/27	Gleason Lake	Wayzata	Plymouth	Minnehaha	4	100
10	3/28	Plymouth Creek	Wayzata	Plymouth	Bassett	5	125
11	4/19	Palmer Lake	Osseo	Brooklyn Park	Shingle	4	88
12	4/18	Good Shepherd	Parochial	St. Louis Park	Bassett	2	48
13	5/1	Zachary Lane Elementary	Robbinsdale	Plymouth	Bassett	4	110
14	5/25	Rush Creek	Osseo	Maple Grove	Elm	5	140
15	5/22	Birchview	Wayzata	Plymouth	Bassett	4	90
16	5/18	Meadow Ridge Elementary**	Wayzata	Plymouth	Elm	5	137
17	4/10	Greenwood Elementary	Wayzata	Plymouth	Bassett	5	127
18	5/16	Northport Elementary	Robbinsdale	Brooklyn Ctr	Shingle	5	107
19	5/31	Meadowbrook Elementary	Hopkins	Golden Valley	Bassett	4	112
20	10/7	Sacred Heart	Parochial	Robbinsdale	Shingle	1	24
21	4/25	Mary Queen Of Peace	Parochial	Rogers	Elm	1	8
22	10/12	Basswood Elementary	Osseo	Maple Grove	Elm	3	89
23	10/17	Palmer Lake	Osseo	Brooklyn Park	Shingle	3	88
24	10/16	Champlin Brooklyn Park	Anoka-Hennepin	Champlin	W. Miss	6	163
25	11/17	Rogers Elementary School	Elk River	Rogers	Elm	4	132
26	10/26	Oxbow Creek Elementary	Anoka-Hennepin	Champlin	W. Miss	7	208
27	10/6	School of Engineering and Arts	Robbinsdale	Golden Valley	Bassett	3	129
28	10/12	Monroe Elementary	Anoka-Hennepin	Brooklyn Park	W. Miss	4	130
29	10/4	Sonnesyn Elementary	Robbinsdale	New Hope	Bassett	3	71
30	12/20	Robbinsdale Spanish Imm.	Robbinsdale	Plymouth	Bassett	5	119
31	11/21	Zanewood Elementary	Osseo	Brooklyn Park	Shingle	3	75
32	9/11	Weaver Lake Science Math & Tech	Osseo	Maple Grove	Elm	4	120

Total: 125 3358

APPENDIX A – WATERSHED PREP / EDUCATOR ACTIVITY

Table 3. 2017 schools and students participating in Lesson 2: The Incredible Journey

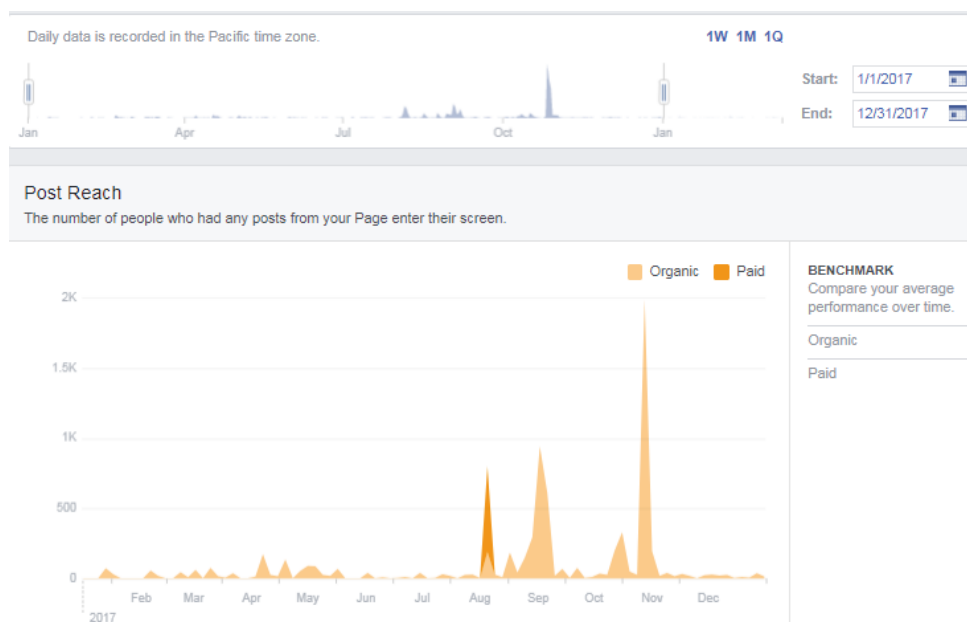
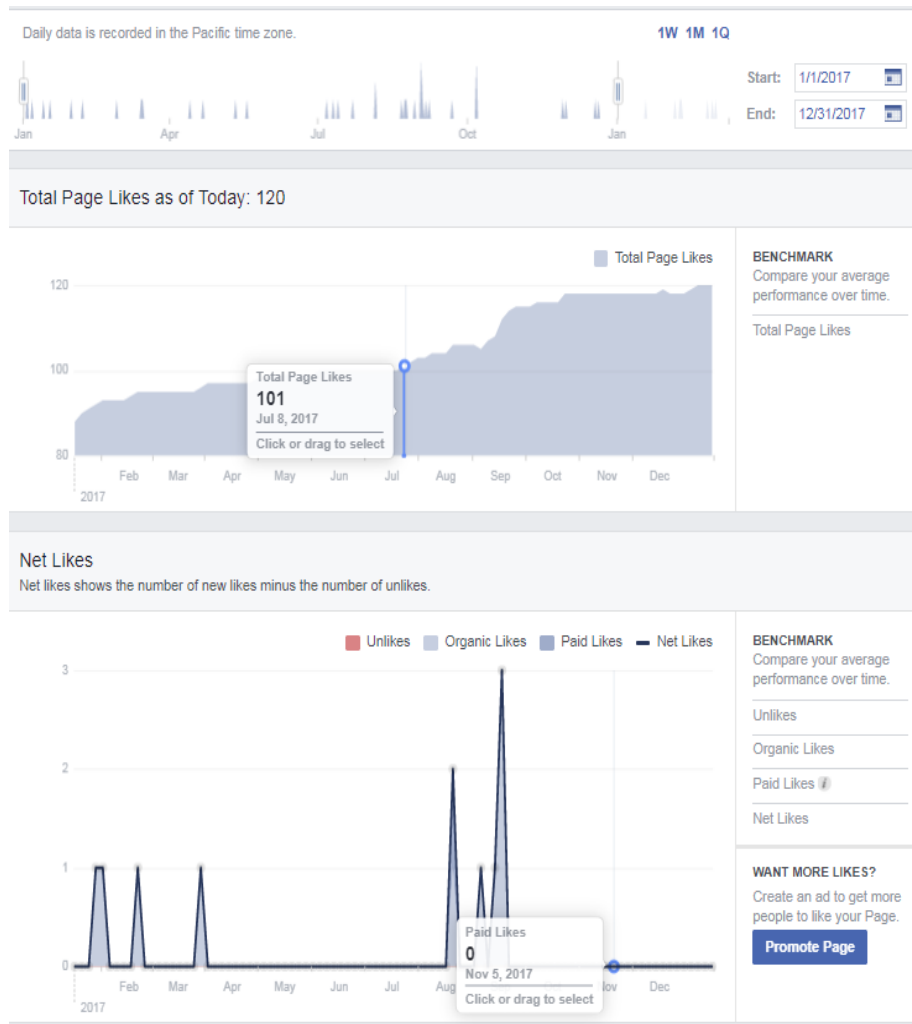
	Date	School	School District		Watershed	Classes	Students
1	1/26	Zanewood Elementary	Osseo	Brooklyn Park	Shingle	3	66
2	4/13	Palmer Lake	Osseo	Brooklyn Park	Shingle	4	88
3	5/11	Rush Creek	Osseo	Maple Grove	Elm	5	140
4	5/17	Meadowbrook Elementary	Hopkins	Golden Valley	Bassett	4	112
5	10/6	School of Engrg & Arts (SEA)	Robbinsdale	Golden Valley	Bassett	1	42
6	10/16	Palmer Lake	Osseo	Brooklyn Park	Shingle	3	87
7	10/18	Basswood Elementary	Osseo	Maple Grove	Elm	3	90
8	10/30	Rogers Elementary	Elk River	Rogers	Elm	7	212
9	11/2	Sacred Heart	Parochial	Robbinsdale	Shingle	1	24
10	10/3	Sonnesyn Elementary	Robbinsdale	New Hope	Bassett	3	72
11	11/14	Zanewood Elementary	Osseo	Brooklyn Park	Shingle	3	75
12	10/5	Jackson MS-Water Day (6th gr)	Anoka-Hennepin	Champlin	W. Miss	4	130
13	11/21	Sonnesyn Elementary	Robbinsdale	New Hope	Bassett	2	75
Total						38	1072

Evaluation:

The educators evaluate the success of the Fourth Grade Program by surveying students and teachers about the quality of the program, the learning that was observed, and the performance of the educators. Much of the feedback occurs during and right after the presentations in spontaneous comments.

APPENDIX B – WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

Likes



APPENDIX C – BUDGET

WMWA 2017 Operating Budget

	BC	EC	SC	WM	Partners	Total	Actual 2017 thru 1/16/2018		
							Revenue	Expense	Balance
Member Reimbursement Admin/Tech Servs									
Routine tasks, coordinate newsletter, etc.	3,750	3,750	3,750	3,750		15,000	15,360	13,631	1,729
Annual Report, Newsletter, Social Media							\$360 carryover from 2016		
Member Reimbursement – Special Projects	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500		6,000	9,910	2,856	7,054
							\$3,910 carryover from 2016		
Watershed PREP	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500		18,000	25,961	11,252	14,709
Fourth Grade Initiative							\$7961 carryover from 2016		
Public Outreach									
Green Yard Workshops – Metro Blooms*	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	2,500	14,500	10,677	10,947	270
							\$750 OST from City of Champlin		
Total	12,750	12,750	12,750	12,750	2,500	53,500	61,908	38,686	23,222

APPENDIX C – BUDGET

WMWA 2018 Operating Budget

Revenue	BC	EC	SC	WM	Partners	Total
Member Reimbursement Admin/Tech Servs	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000		16,000
Member Reimbursement - Special Projects	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000		8,000
Watershed PREP	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500		18,000
Fourth Grade Initiative						
Public Outreach						
Green Yard Workshops - Metro Blooms	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	2,500	14,500
Total Revenue	10,500	10,500	10,500	10,500	0	42,000



Metro Blooms

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Media Alert

For Immediate Release

Contact: Becky Rice, becky@metroblooms.org, 612-865-0248

Learn How to Create a Weather Resilient Yard

2017 spring workshops hosted by Metro Blooms across the metro

What: Unseasonably warm weather, long periods of drought, and flooding rains are the new normal for Minnesota's spring and summer seasons. Metro Blooms *Creating Weather Resilient Yards* workshops will give you an overview of the Minnesota's changing weather patterns and ways to mitigate the impact in your own yard. You'll receive recommendations for your own property and options for establishing mowable, native alternatives to "grass" turf. Includes one-on-one assistance from Metro Blooms landscape designers, Blue Thumb *Planting for Clean Water* Partners, Hennepin County Master Gardeners, and Master Water Stewards, as well as information about cost share programs and Blue Thumb resources for help along the way.

When:

Thursday, April 6, 2017
6-9 PM
Champlin City Hall
11955 Champlin Drive, Champlin, MN 55316

Where:

How to Register:

Visit metroblooms.org to register online, or call 651-699-2426 *This workshop is just \$15 per household, so register soon. Some locations fill up fast.* You can also mail your registration to Workshop Registration, P.O. Box 17099, Minneapolis, MN 55417. Enclose a check payable to Metro Blooms, and include the workshop location, your name, address, zip code, phone number and your email address.

Why:

Increasingly severe changes in Minnesota's weather patterns are impacting all of us, but these changes are felt the most in our cities. The urban heat "island effect" intensifies heat waves, and instead of storm water soaking into the soil where it can be cleaned, cooled and in turn help cool the earth - the high amount of impervious surface causes storm water to runoff carrying with it toxins and pollutants directly to our waters. You will learn there are many ways to create a more resilient landscape that can improve the microclimate in your own yard and protect our natural environment.

Who:

Workshop presented by Metro Blooms, sponsored by the City of Champlin, Shingle Creek and West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission, Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission, and the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission.

Metro Blooms, a local non-profit organization, works to strengthen communities by promoting environmentally-sound landscaping that beautifies neighborhoods and protects our environment.