

minnetonka memo

A Newsletter from the City of Minnetonka
April 2011

Attend the Silver Skates Ice Revue May 5, 6 and 7



MINNETONKA ICE ARENA'S ALL SEASON SKATING SCHOOL IS PROUD to present the 37th Annual Silver Skates Ice Revue, "Minnesota N'Ice." More than 250 skaters from Minnetonka and surrounding communities are featured again this year. Show times are:

Thursday	May 5	6:30 p.m.
Friday	May 6	6:30 p.m.
Saturday	May 7	2:00 p.m.

General Admission for each performance is \$6 with free admission for children under 5. Senior citizens and individuals with special needs are granted free admission to our Saturday afternoon performance. Don't forget to bring a coat or blanket, as it gets cold in the ice arena.

Summer skating lessons

Interested in skating lessons? Summer skating lessons for both children and adults are held on Monday evenings beginning June 6. Call the Minnetonka Ice Arena at (952) 939-8310 for more information. For a registration brochure, visit www.eminnetonka.com and click on "Recreation," then "Facilities," then "Ice Arena." ☺

Take the 2011 Step to It Challenge

DO YOU HAVE A COMPETITIVE SPIRIT? DO YOU WANT A FUN and easy way to get in shape this spring? Then find those walking shoes or oil that bike chain and get ready for the four-week Step To It Challenge from May 9–June 5! Minnetonka is one of 22 Hennepin County communities taking the challenge.

Get active with your community!

The Step To It Challenge is a fun, free, lighted-hearted way to connect with family, friends and neighbors, and get moving again after a long winter. Participating cities compete to see which one has the most active residents and participants from each city will have a chance to be honored by Hennepin County and the Minnesota Twins at a Twins home game during the 2011 season. This event is for everyone—the entire family can join in the fun! If you live or work in Minnetonka you qualify!

How does it work?

As a Step To It participant, you will keep an ongoing total of the steps you take during the challenge. Using an activity conversion chart at www.steptoit.org, other activities such as biking, skateboarding, tai chi, or even mowing the lawn can count toward overall steps. A website will allow you to record your steps online, or your step total can be called in or faxed. Best of all, it's free! Register online beginning April 1 at www.steptoit.org.

Kick-Off Event

A Step To It kick-off event will be held in early May. Visit www.eminnetonka.com for the date, time and location of the event. ☺

Natural Resource Notes

See insert for:



Tree sale pick up info



Workshops



Plant walks



Yard waste recycling

Join these exciting April adult programs

DO YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN engaging and lively activities that provide mental and/or physical exercise, and provide social interaction? Below is just a sample of the exciting activities offered each month for adults, all of which are advertised in a weekly email as well as a free monthly publication, the *Minnetonka Script*. Subscribe to one or both of these publications by visiting www.eminnetonka.com, or contact Nicole Gorman at ngorman@eminnetonka.com or (952) 939-8369.

Special Presentations

Bike Club Kick-Off

April 8, 9:30 a.m.
Trail summary and other information will be presented. Bike group meets every Tuesday and Thursday.

Author Faye Berger

April 11, 10:30 a.m.
Faye Berger tells her father's story, "Gumption, Lessons on Old Age, Loneliness and a Hotdish." Cost is \$2 due by April 7.

Garden Club

April 11, 1 p.m.
A Tonkadale Nursery representative will speak on the topic "Waking Up the Garden for Spring." New members welcome.

Nordic Walking Intro

April 13, 10 a.m.
Get outdoors and get active. Learn how to use Nordic walking poles to increase your walking workout. Cost is \$2 due by April 11. A second class with further instruction will be held at a later date for an additional cost.

Community Connections

April 22, 10:15 a.m.
Join Community Connections for an informal chat with Minnetonka City Manager John Gunyou. Coffee will be provided. RSVP by April 18.

Remembering the Holocaust

April 20, 1 p.m.
Curtis Walter Hort (born Walter Kurt Horwitz) will talk about his life in Nazi Germany and how he came to live in the United States. Cost is \$2 due by April 18.

Health Care Directives Day

April 15, 10:15 a.m.
Local volunteer attorneys and social workers will provide free help to complete your notarized health care directive. Register for this free event by April 13 by calling (952) 939-8393.

Libbs Lake Hike

April 26, 9 a.m.
Meet at the park and ride on Minnetonka Boulevard and Steele Street for this free two-mile hike. Bring your own water. Maps are available at the senior center front desk.

Navigating Medicare

April 27, 6:30 p.m.
Learn about Medicare. Cost is \$10, due by April 25.

Golf League

Mondays, May 16–Aug. 15, 9:30–10:30 a.m. tee times
This 12-week co-ed

morning golf league plays at three local courses. Cost is \$162, cart rental extra. Register by April 15. Space is limited.

Defensive Driving Classes

Call the Minnesota Safety Center at 1-888-234-1294 to register. AAA members receive \$3 off class registration by providing member number and expiration date.

Four-Hour Day Courses

April 7, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
April 26, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Refreshments provided (no meal). Cost: \$20. ☺



What's new at Shady Oak Beach?

COME EARLY JUNE, YOUNG VISITORS to Shady Oak Beach will find an exciting new feature to enjoy — the Shady Oak Beach Community Play Area!

Replacing the older water feature at the beach, the new community play area will offer multiple play areas suitable for ages 1 – 12. Just a few of the features include water tables, water misters and a "fossil dig" for exploration. Unlike the previous water play area, which could be used only during the summer months, this area will be available for a longer period of time each year — from April through October. This year, the play area is slated for completion by early June.

The cities of Hopkins and Minnetonka received an \$187,500 Hennepin Youth Sports Program grant to develop the new play area. Funding for the grant came from tax dollars collected for the new Minnesota Twins stadium and designated for youth sports/recreational enrichment.

Be sure to stop by and check out this exciting new feature at Shady Oak Beach! For more information about hours and season pass purchases, visit www.eminnetonka.com. ☺

Adopt a park sign

MINNETONKA'S "ADOPT-A-PARK SIGN" program has been a great way for individuals, families, and organizations in the community to come together and share their gardening talents with others by planting flowers around city park signs.

This year, the city will again collaborate with a local greenhouse to provide some annuals/perennials of the volunteer's choice to plant and maintain during the 2011 growing season. Last year's volunteers will be given first priority to adopt the sign they cared for in 2010. If you are interested in adopting a park sign or would like more information, please contact Kathy Kline, facilities and senior services secretary, at (952) 939-8391 or kkline@eminnetonka.com. ☺



Reserve summer picnic spots now

IF YOU'RE PLANNING A SUMMER PICNIC, reserve a place now at a Minnetonka or Hopkins picnic shelters, located in Lone Lake, Gro-Tonka and Shady Oak parks in Minnetonka; and Burnes, Central and Valley parks in Hopkins.

Park systems in both communities provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities to enhance your picnic. A description of each facility's amenities and hours of availability, fees, and application forms are available online at www.eminnetonka.com. Summer weekend dates fill quickly, so be sure to request your reservation as far in advance as possible. Guidelines are as follows. For more information, call (952) 939-8390.

- A permit is required to reserve a picnic shelter at a park facility for groups of 25 people or more.
- Picnic shelters can be reserved by phone, fax, mail, or in person.
- Applications must be received at least seven days in advance of your requested date, and payment must be included. Applicants must be 18 years of age or older to reserve a facility.
- Beer permit applications can only be submitted in-person with a valid picture ID. Applicants must be 21 years of age or older to obtain a beer permit.
- Shelters are not reserved until payment has been received. Checks are payable to the Facilities Division, or you may use a credit card. Please include credit card number and expiration date.
- Reservations by phone at (952) 939-8390 or fax (952) 939-8373 must be paid for with a credit card. ☺

Sign up for the Get Active e-newsletter

IF YOU'D LIKE QUARTERLY E-MAIL updates of recreation events and activities taking place in Hopkins and Minnetonka, sign up for *Get Active*, an e-newsletter from Hopkins-Minnetonka Recreation Services. *Get Active* highlights upcoming activities for youth, adults and seniors. Sign up online at www.eminnetonka.com (click News and Events, then Publications, then *Get Active*) or send an email to recservices@eminnetonka.com indicating your interest in receiving the newsletter. ☺

Plan now for Music in the Park

SUMMER MAY STILL SEEM LIKE A FAR-off dream, but June will be here before you know it! Mark your calendars now for the 2011 Music in the Park concert series, set for Tuesdays, 7–8:30 p.m. starting June 7. Concerts are at the outdoor amphitheater at the Minnetonka Civic Center Campus, 14600 Minnetonka Blvd., Minnetonka. Also, June 14–16, enjoy Theater in the Park, presented by the Minnetonka Community Theatre.

- **June 7**— Jeff Carver, Carol Zimmerman (*smooth jazz/pop*)
- **June 14–16**— Minnetonka Community Theater presents "Rugrats: A Live Adventure" (*11 a.m. performances June 14, 15 and 16; additional 7 p.m. performance June 14*)
- **June 21**— Brio Brass (*30-piece, brassy jazz*)
- **June 28**— Lehto and Wright (*Celtic, folk rock*)
- **July 5**— Don King Blues Band and Friends (*blues*)



- **July 12**— Eden Prairie Community Band (*45-piece band*)
- **July 19**— Tom Hunter Quartet (*blues, Jazz*)
- **July 26**— Jumpin' Jehosafats (*Dixieland, gospel and all that jazz*)
- **Aug 2**— Blue Feelin' (*acoustic blues*) ☺

Williston offers new birthday party packages

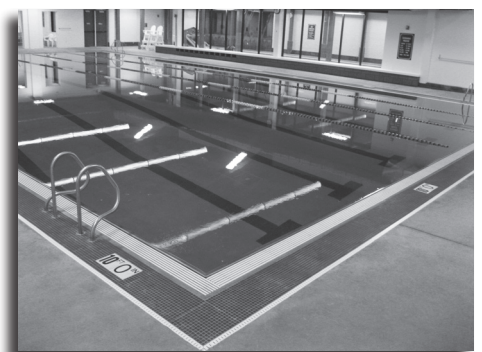
WILLISTON FITNESS CENTER IS NEARING the end of a huge renovation, with a new zero-depth splash pad, locker rooms and fitness area, as well as an indoor children's play structure scheduled for completion in April.

New birthday party packages are available for the two new pools, a 25-yard lap pool and the zero-depth splash pad, perfect for young children. Coming soon, an additional birthday party package will be available for the indoor play structure.

For more information visit www.eminnetonka.com or call (952) 939-8370.

Grand opening is May 15

Join a grand opening celebration Sunday, May 15, for the newly renovated Williston Fitness Center. Festivities begin at 9:45 a.m. with a ribbon cutting ceremony, with doors opening at 10 a.m. and special activities until 3 p.m. The center will be open for regular activities during this time as well. Look for more information in the May *Minnetonka Memo*. ☺



Flashpoints

From the Minnetonka Fire Department



IN FIREFIGHTING LINGO, A FLASHPOINT is the temperature at which combustible materials may burst into flame. The flashpoints in this quarterly feature, however, are not so volatile — rather, they are the initiatives and events that serve as the catalyst for the excellent service provided every day by the Minnetonka Fire Department to city residents and businesses. For more information about any of these items, call the fire department at (952) 939-8598.

Recreational fires

All recreational fires (campfires) within the city of Minnetonka require a burning permit from the city and can be obtained on the city website at www.eminnetonka.com. Once issued, the permit does not have to be renewed annually, but may be rescinded or cancelled by the Minnetonka Fire Department at any time.

Please be considerate of your neighbors! Be aware of where the smoke from your fire is going. The person signing the application is responsible for conducting, controlling and extinguishing the recreational fire. The burning permit is valid only for the property for which it is issued.

Fire extinguisher recycling

If you have an expired or empty residential fire extinguisher, you can recycle it at the Minnetonka Fire Department Station 1, 14550 Minnetonka Boulevard, Monday through Friday from 8 am – 4:30 pm. It will be sent to a local extinguisher servicing company for proper recycling.

Fire responses

During the first quarter of 2011, the fire department responded to about 300 calls for service. The department's duty crew now handles most of the regular calls, while about 40 of the city's 80 paid-on-call firefighters come in for every structure fire.

Significant events this quarter included a residential structure fire on Kings Drive, a business fire on Bren Road East and a carbon monoxide incident on Townes Road. The department also provided mutual aid to St. Louis Park for a chlorine spill at a shopping mall and to Plymouth for a major apartment fire.

Fire training update

The average firefighter in Minnetonka attended more than 45 hours of training during the first quarter of 2011. This quarter's training included the following:

- A presentation designed to help firefighters understand new procedures that improve their safety, health and effectiveness at emergency scenes. This training was attended by more than 150 firefighters from Bloomington, Hopkins, Minnetonka, Richfield and St. Louis Park.
- A presentation from the Minneapolis Police Department bomb squad on device recognition and scene response.
- Initial training, installation and testing of new turnout gear.
- A refresher presentation by the Minnetonka Police Department on assisting with law enforcement rapid-entry teams, followed by a simulated rapid-entry rescue exercise.
- The annual SKYWARN refresher, including information from the National Weather Service on severe weather spotting. This annual training is required to maintain Minnetonka's StormReady certification. ☺

Severe Weather Awareness Week is set for April 11 – 15: Know your disasters

EACH DAY OF SEVERE WEATHER Awareness Week, April 11 – 15, focuses on a different topic. Take time now to ensure you and your family are educated about and ready for these severe weather events.

- **April 11: Thunderstorms, hail, straight-line winds, and lightning** cause extensive damage across Minnesota every year.
- **April 12: Severe weather warnings, watches and advisories** are prepared by the National Weather Service in Chanhassen and distributed through the Emergency Alert System (via local media), weather radios and outdoor warning sirens (tornado warnings).
- **April 13: Floods and flash floods** occur every year in Minnesota, most of them in June. As you may recall, southeastern Minnesota was hit hard by flash-flooding in August 2007. Half of flash flood fatalities occur in vehicles.
- **April 14: Tornado Drill Day**
The National Weather Service will simulate a tornado watch starting at 9 a.m. Two tornado drills, with simulated tornado warnings and sounding of the outdoor warning sirens, will occur at 1:45 and 6:55 p.m. The first allows schools and businesses to practice sheltering plans while the second allows families and second-shift workers to practice their plans.
- **April 15: Heat-related fatalities** outpace deaths in several other weather categories. Based on a national average from 1992 – 2001, excessive heat claimed 219 lives each year while floods killed 88, tornadoes 57, lightning 52 and hurricanes 15. ☺



Take care of the environment during landscape and construction projects

IF YOU'RE PLANNING A NEW LANDSCAPE or construction project, consider how your project will affect the natural resources on your property. Start with these questions: How much soil will you be disturbing and how will you contain it during a rain storm? How will the project impact your favorite trees? Is there a wetland, creek, or lake nearby?

Use the brief set of guidelines below to help your project run smoothly.

- Minimize tree impacts within the critical root zone (approximately one and one-half feet from the trunk of the tree for every inch of trunk diameter) to help prevent tree loss. Install orange construction fence to prevent soil compaction, fill and excavation in this area.
- Install silt fence (buried four to six inches into the soil) down slope of the area of exposed soil **before** you begin and maintain until groundcover is established.

- Cover exposed stockpiles, steep slopes and other areas of potential erosion with tarps, wood chips, straw mulch or temporary seed (such as oats or annual ryegrass) to help prevent erosion.
- Establish permanent groundcover (such as lawn or mulched planting beds) as soon as possible to prevent erosion and protect water quality.
- Keep the roadway free of sediment, tracked materials and debris.
- Consider green building techniques. Use eco-friendly construction materials, energy and water efficient designs and appliances, and recycle or reuse your construction debris.

Contact the city about permitting or other requirements and let your contractor know that you care about the natural resources in your community before you start your next project. For more information visit www.eminnetonka.com — click on Natural Resources, then Development and Construction. ♪

About spring flooding in Minnetonka

SPRING FLOODING HAS BEEN A MAIN topic of conversation for several weeks. Flooding in Minnetonka usually affects primarily public parks and open space. Fortunately, Minnetonka's many wetlands and large amounts of open space act as natural sponges, absorbing excess water.

Isolated catch basins around the city may temporarily experience high water if outlet pipes are clogged or frozen. The city monitors those areas and responds as quickly as possible in order to unclog pipes and keep water flowing.



Residents in areas that have flooded in the past have good reason to be concerned about flooding again this year.

During the spring thaw, follow these tips:

- Be sure your neighborhood storm drain is free of debris so water can flow freely.
- Keep window wells, gutters and downspouts clear of debris.
- Remove excess snow from your home's foundation.
- Make sure your sump pump is operational. Check to see if your insurance covers sump pump failure and/or sewer backup.
- Your insurance agent is your contact to discuss flood insurance.

If you have further questions about high water this spring, please contact Liz Stout, city of Minnetonka water resources engineer, at (952) 939-8233. ♪

Be cautious with telephone sales

NO MATTER THE WEATHER, telemarketers are busy calling potential customers. And now, with spring upon us, solicitors, peddlers and canvassers may soon arrive at your door. We want you to be aware of the following information related to sales in Minnetonka.

Endorsement of services

Be wary of vendors who claim either that the city has endorsed their product or service or that the city has contracted with the company to provide a product or service to residents.

For the most part, the city does not contract with private companies for services or products. When the city does hire a private company to provide a service, it notifies residents of the relationship.

The city does not endorse any private products or services. If a vendor claims either of these things, please contact the city at (952) 939-8200 for more information before you make an appointment or purchase a product. Also note the below information about license requirements for door-to-door sales.

Door-to-door sales

While solicitors, peddlers and canvassers are allowed in Minnetonka, for-profit sale of products or services requires a license from the city. The city does not endorse any specific product or service by the issuing of this license.

Charitable organizations conducting door-to-door sales or solicitations do not need a license, unless they pay their solicitors. However, the city requests that charitable organizations register with the city.

Every resident and business has the right to prohibit peddlers and solicitors from their property. If you post a sign on your home or business that prohibits solicitors, they are not permitted to approach your property.

A current list of licensed solicitors, peddlers and canvassers, as well as the charitable agencies that have registered, is available on the city website at www.eminnetonka.com. Click on Community Development, then Licenses, then Solicitors, Peddlers and Canvassers.

If you have a complaint about a door-to-door salesperson or soliciting party, please immediately contact the Minnetonka Police Department at (952) 939-8500. ♪

Storm water meeting set for April 21

RESIDENTS WHO WANT TO LEARN MORE about the city's water resources and storm water quality are invited to the city of Minnetonka's annual storm water informational meeting during the city's Planning Commission meeting Thursday, April 21 at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the Minnetonka Community Center, 14600 Minnetonka Boulevard.

After a brief presentation about the city's Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP), Low Impact Development (LID) and impaired waters, staff will answer questions and take comments regarding the city's current programs and future plans for storm water.

Copies of the SWPPP may be examined at the engineering department in city hall during regular business hours (8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday) or on the city's website at www.eminnetonka.com. For more information call Liz Stout, water resources engineer, at (952) 939-8233.

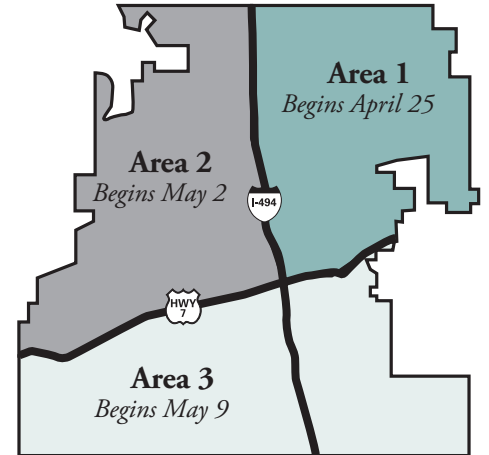
Water main flushing starts April 25

MINNETONKA PUBLIC WORKS WILL flush water mains throughout the city from April 25 through May 12, weekdays from 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. in most areas. See accompanying map to determine dates in your area.

- **Area 1** Begins April 25
- **Area 2** Begins May 2
- **Area 3** Begins May 9

Flushing in the areas listed below will occur at these special times:

- **April 25** Ridgedale business area: 5:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- **May 2** Minnetonka Industrial Road, Twelve Oaks Center, Carlson Parkway: 5 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- **May 9** Opus, Beachside, K-Tel, Clearwater Drive, White water Drive, Culligan Way: 3 a.m. – 11 a.m.



Flushing schedules may be adjusted due to weather conditions.

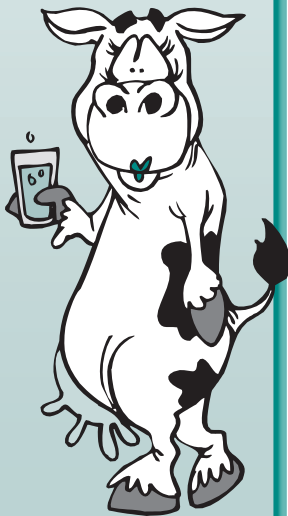
During the flushing period it is normal to experience some discolored water. This water is safe to drink and can be cleared up by running the cold water in your laundry tub. If you experience problems, please contact Minnetonka Public Works at (952) 988-8400.

Remembering the city's last dairy farm

THE MINNETONKA HISTORICAL Society will host its annual spring meeting Tuesday, May 3, at 7 p.m. at the Minnetonka Community Center, 14600

Minnetonka Boulevard, Minnetonka.

This year's presentation features information about the last dairy farm in Minnetonka, which was owned by Herbert and Betty Paulsen. The history of the farm will be described in maps and pictures as well as audio recordings from Betty Paulsen and her ten children.



Farmers' Market returns July 5

THE MINNETONKA FARMERS' MARKET returns for its third year, starting July 5 and continuing every Tuesday through September 27, from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Minnetonka Civic Center Campus, 14600 Minnetonka Boulevard, Minnetonka. Enjoy the products of many local vendors selling a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, flowers, canned goods, syrup, honey, bread, baked goods and crafts. See the July *Minnetonka Memo* or visit www.eminnetonka.com for a



complete list of vendors and activities. See you at the market!



Photo courtesy of Joanie Michaud



2011 MINNETONKA RECYCLING UPDATE

Spring Leaf Drop-off Program

Public Works Facility

11522 Minnetonka Blvd., ¼ mi. west of Cty. Rd. 73
Enter on the west side of the building (near the Big Willow ball fields)

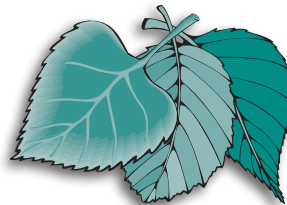
The Public Works facility at 11522 Minnetonka Blvd will be **the only** site accepting leaves and yard waste. During the busiest times there will be expanded drop-off days. In addition to the normal operating schedule, the site will be open Friday, May 6 and 13, from 12 to 6 p.m. and Sunday, May 1, 8 and 15, from 12 to 4 p.m. You must present proper identification to verify you are a Minnetonka resident (driver's license, state I.D., or Minnetonka utility bill).

If you have other means of handling your leaves such as collection by your garbage hauler or backyard composting, please use that option! All garbage haulers offer curbside collection of yard waste for a fee (either an annual, monthly, per cart or per bag fee). Check with your garbage hauler for details.

State law requires proper compostable bags for curbside collection of bagged yardwaste — **regular plastic bags are not allowed**. Some companies offer yardwaste carts, eliminating the need for using bags.

LEAVES — Truck and trailer loads of leaves will be accepted only at Minnetonka Public Works and only during brush drop-off hours on the following dates:

- **Mondays:** 12 to 8 p.m. April 11, 18, 25, and May 2, 9
- **Tuesdays:** 12 to 8 p.m. April 12, 19, 26, and May 3, 10
- **Fridays:** 12 to 6 p.m. May 6, 13
- **Saturdays:** 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 16, 23, 30 and May 7, 14
- **Sundays:** 12 to 4 p.m. May 1, 8, 15



Spring leaf drop-off ends Sunday, May 15.

The city leaf drop-off site is bag-free. Residents will unload and/or unbag their leaves and yardwaste onto the large bulk pile and take all empty bags home for reuse or disposal — including paper and compostable bags. Please bring proper equipment, such as a stout pitch fork, to unload your truck or trailer load of leaves.

The suggested method is to use many layers of tarps between a foot or less of leaves. Use the tarp to gather up and move a small pile of leaves from your yard to your trailer or vehicle, continue using lots of small tarps until the vehicle is full. This makes unloading your leaves easier and faster at the site. All you need to do is flip off the tarps one at a time. Sticks and branches smaller than ½ inch in diameter are acceptable with leaves; anything larger goes to the brush pile. (See the brush drop-off article at top right.) **Loads of leaves must be covered during transport!**

Information about composting and yard waste management is available from Dean Elstad, at (952) 988-8430. ☺



Brush drop-off opens April 11

The brush drop-off program for Minnetonka residents is open Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Mondays and Tuesdays from noon to 8 p.m. starting Monday, April 11. Brush drop-off will end November 19, 2011.

The brush drop-off site will be closed on the following three holidays: Memorial Day, May 30; Independence Day, July 4; and Labor Day, September 5.

Branches up to 12" in diameter will be accepted. Proof of Minnetonka residency is required to drop-off brush (driver's license or utility bill).

Please note: trash, grass, loose leaves, dirt, sod, lumber, fencing, or wood scraps are not accepted. No brush will be accepted from commercial tree or lawn services.

Call (952) 988-8430 during business hours or leave a message anytime. ☺

Chemicals and your yard

Many residents are reducing their use of chemicals on lawns and gardens in favor of safer alternatives. In addition, many lawn care companies now use non-toxic treatments. Consider these non-toxic alternatives:

- Create healthy soil by leaving clippings on the lawn and mulching leaves in the fall.
- Water infrequently but deeply to promote deep root growth.
- Mow high, 2–4 inches, to discourage weed growth. Keep mower blades sharp.
- Aerate lawn in spring or fall.
- Pull weeds by hand. After weeding gardens, apply a thick layer of mulch.
- Learn to live with some weeds.

If you do use pesticides, read the product label and follow all precautions. Mix and use only at the recommended strength and apply only where needed. Don't spray on windy days. Look for synthetic pyrethroid products (instead of organophosphates or carbamates). For more information find a copy of the EPA's "Citizen's Guide to Pest Control and Pesticide Safety" at www.epa.gov/oppfead1/Publications/Cit_Guide. ☺

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April 2011



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CITY OF MINNETONKA

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Ward 2: Tony Wagner... (952) 512-1817 twagner@eminnetonka.com
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Ward 4: James Hiller... (952) 974-1003 jhiller@eminnetonka.com

Minnetonka Mike.....(952) 939-8586 mike@eminnetonka.com

POLICE-FIRE: Emergency..... 9-1-1
Non-emergency.....(952) 939-8500 or 9-1-1

ECRWSS
POSTAL PATRON

Calendar

City of
Minnetonka

April
2011

Call (952) 939-8200
for meeting
locations.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S	Call (952) 939-8200 for meeting locations.
					1	2	6 Park Board, 7 p.m. 18 City Council, 6:30 p.m.
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7 Planning Commission, 6:30 p.m. 21 Police Advisory Commission, 5:30 p.m.; Planning Commission, 6:30 p.m.
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	11 City Council study session, 6:30 p.m. (<i>Topic: Capital Improvements Program</i>) 25 Community Commission, 6:30 p.m.
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	12 Senior Advisory Board, 10 a.m.; Annual Neighborhood Watch Event, 7–8:30 p.m. 28 Economic Development Advisory Commission, 6:30 p.m.
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	

All meetings listed above are open to the public. Meeting dates and times are subject to change—please check www.eminnetonka.com for the latest information.

Minnetonka City Council and Planning Commission meetings are broadcast live on cable channel 16, and replays are available Mondays and Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays at noon, or anytime via videostream at www.eminnetonka.com. Agendas for council meetings are available on the city's website by the Friday afternoon prior to the meeting, and planning commission agendas are available by the Monday prior to the meeting.

Staying informed about city projects

THE CITY REGULARLY RECEIVES applications for projects that require planning commission and/or city council approval. Information on these, as well as many other city projects, is regularly updated on the city's website. If you'd like to stay informed, visit "MyMinnetonka" at www.eminnetonka.com—click on "MyMinnetonka" under "Top Picks." Through MyMinnetonka, you can learn about new projects in the city; provide online feedback on projects during their approval process, and receive email updates on projects. Planning commission meeting agendas are posted the Monday prior to the meeting. Visit www.eminnetonka.com for information. ∞

Donations accepted: city funds, scholarships

THE CITY OCCASIONALLY RECEIVES inquiries from residents who are interested in making a donation or contribution to the city. If you are interested, below are the following funds the city makes available for donations.

- **Crime Prevention Fund:** Donations to this 501(c)3 account are used to purchase crime prevention materials and also materials used for teaching the CounterAct drug and alcohol prevention program in schools. This fund is managed by the Minnetonka Police Department.
- **Fire Apparatus Fund:** This fund was recently established to pay for the

increasingly expensive equipment and vehicles used by the Minnetonka Fire Department. Intended uses range from new fire trucks to the gear used by firefighters.

- **Richard Wilson Scholarship Fund:** This fund provides financial aid for Hopkins-Minnetonka recreation programs for Minnetonka and Hopkins children and seniors.

Checks may be made payable to the City of Minnetonka. Please indicate to which fund you would like to contribute. The city will also send out an acknowledgement of your donation for your records. ∞

Natural Resource Notes

Turn your green habits inside out

MANY OF US IN MINNETONKA live the green lifestyle. We turn off the lights in a room when we leave, run the dishwasher only when it's full, bring our own bags to the market, combine our errands into one trip and recycle everything from banana peels to paper plates.

Now you can turn your green habits inside out and take those green living principles outdoors. This edition of *Natural Resource Notes* includes articles on yard waste recycling. Learn helpful hints on how to recycle your yard waste to make your yard healthier and limit the amount of yard waste you send to the curb. ♻️



Keep grass clippings out of the street

Did you order trees? Pick them up!

DID YOU ORDER A TREE THROUGH THE city tree sale? Be sure to mark your calendar now and pick them up:

When

Friday, April 29, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. or
Saturday, April 30, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Where

Minnetonka Public Works (at a different location than Minnetonka City Hall)
11522 Minnetonka Boulevard, Minnetonka
Follow the signs to the east driveway
(recycling drop-off center)

More information:

- Trees must be picked on the designated pick-up dates. Trees that are not picked up are forfeited and will be planted in a Minnetonka park.
- You pick the date that works for you — Friday or Saturday.
- Keep your yellow confirmation post card to present to city staff. Confirmation post cards will be sent to participants two weeks prior to the event as an additional reminder.
- Ask your neighbor, friend, or family member to pick up the trees on your behalf if you will be out of town. Be sure to give them your yellow confirmation card to present.

If we have a warm spring, and you notice that trees in your yard are already starting to leaf out, we recommend you bring a tarp or sheet to protect your new trees. This helps prevent stressful water loss through the opening buds and leaves as they travel down the road in an open truck bed or trailer.

Questions? Call Emily Ball, city forester, at (952) 988-8400.

Learn how to plant your tree right

THINK YOU ONLY NEED A SHOVEL TO plant a tree? New research shows you need a saw as well. Read on for more tree planting tips.

- After you remove the plastic container from the root ball, inspect where the stem meets the soil. Look for the first woody root about the size of a pencil. If you cannot find it, remove soil with your hands or a small garden fork until you can see it. It may be shocking how much soil you need to remove, but keep going — this step helps prevent girdling and dysfunctional roots.
- Keep the root ball moist as you prepare to plant it or fine roots may die in the process.
- Use a planting knife or hand saw to cut the edges of the soil ball to remove encircling, pot bound roots. Now your root ball looks a little like a soil cube.

- Dig the hole 2 to 3 times as wide as the root ball. Do not dig the hole too deep. It should be no deeper than the height of your root ball, which may seem quite small after you've removed all that excess soil!
- Once the tree is planted, the first woody root should be within one inch of the ground surface.
- Water with a hose on low flow, then mulch, creating a bowl shape to hold in moisture around the tree's root zone. Do not pile mulch next to the tree stem.

For more details and pictures on tree planting and how to avoid stem girdling roots, visit www.eminnetonka.com; call Emily Ball, city forester, at (952) 988-8400; or visit U of MN Extension at <http://www.myminnnesotawoods.umn.edu/2009/01/stem-girdling-roots-booklet/>. Happy planting! ♻️



Learn more about natural resources

IF YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LAWN care, or how to curb garlic mustard, or if you want to take a guided plant walk or wade in a wetland, be sure to read about all of the educational opportunities coming up this spring!



Curb garlic mustard

April 20, May 4, or June 2, 6:30 pm.

April and early May are the best times to control the very invasive garlic mustard plant. Knowing the details of different control methods is important, since this plant comes back easily when timing or methods are off target. Three workshops are scheduled during this plant's peak growth. Attend the workshop in April or May, and get a head start by removing the plant before it produces seed. Learn its biennial life-cycle and discover the growth stages when control is easiest. Handouts provided. RSVP is required — call (952) 988-8400 or register online at www.eminnetonka.com. Location: Minnetonka Community Center, 14600 Minnetonka Blvd., Minnetonka.

Have a healthy yard this year

Have you ever wondered what the best time is to water your plants or what you should do to keep your lawn healthy throughout the summer? Wonder no longer — listen to Gregg Thompson talk about growing healthy plants, managing weeds, using water wisely and ways to recycle your yard. Gregg has more than 15 years of experience in landscape design and water resource management.

This free seminar, set for Wednesday, May 4, from 6:30–8 p.m. at REI Bloomington, 750 West American Blvd., Bloomington, is sponsored by the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District and Blue Thumb Partners. Registration is required — visit www.rei.com/bloomington or contact Claire Bleser of the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District at (952) 358-2276 or cbleser@ninemilecreek.org.

Workshops with Eden Prairie

The cities of Minnetonka and Eden Prairie are partnering to offer a number of environmental workshops through Eden Prairie's Parks and Recreation and Community Education Program this spring. Topics include:

Living with shoreland

April 21

Learn how to stabilize slopes, reduce goose issues, deal with invasive plants and pick the best plants for your shoreland. This class will be offered by Eden Prairie Schools Community Education in their spring/summer catalog. The class will be listed under the "Home Care" section in the Course Catalog. Sign up online at www.epcommunityed.org.

Birdscaping

April 23

St. Paul Audubon Society member Sarah Risser will discuss how to make your property a magnet for songbirds, hummingbirds, bees and butterflies. Sarah will provide tips and handouts for selecting which plants are best at creating bird havens. Offered by Eden Prairie Parks and Recreation Department this spring — register at www.edenprairie.org (go to "eConnect Program Registration"). ☺



Photo by Ralph Dacut

The dirty deeds of dumping

DUMPING OF YARD WASTE SUCH AS leaves, grass clippings, brush and branches is not only unsightly, but can also be illegal. Many people believe that this organic material will simply break down and is not harmful to the environment. The fact is that piles of yard waste do not decompose like compost. Since it doesn't have the material composition to readily break down, it may remain as a pile for many years. If dumped in the woods it can actually smother the desirable woodland species, and disposing of it on city land is illegal.

Help keep your neighborhood green by following these helpful tips for proper disposal of yard waste.

- **Do** use the curbside pick-up service offered by your garbage hauler. Please contact your garbage hauler for details regarding yard waste collection.
- **Do** use the city leaf and brush drop-off programs when available. Check www.eminnetonka.com or the *Minnetonka Memo* for information.
- **Do** consider properly composting some of your yard waste for reuse.
- **Don't** dispose of yard waste on public property. Dumping yard waste on public property is not permitted and can pose damage to existing vegetation as well as become unsightly. Piles of leaves and brush do not readily decompose and may remain visible for years. Waste piles suppress the growth of native vegetation that provides food and shelter for birds and other wildlife, and can help promote the growth of weed species.
- **Don't** dispose of yard waste in or adjacent to wetlands, lakes and creeks. Our wetlands and other water bodies serve many functions including filtering pollutants and sediment from storm water runoff, recharging groundwater supplies, providing food and shelter for wildlife and capturing runoff to prevent flooding. Placing yard waste in these areas can impair these functions. Additionally, as yard waste decomposes it releases nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus which promote the growth of weeds and algae.
- **Don't** blow, rake or deposit yard waste into the street or storm drain. In addition to being unsightly, the materials may block water flow during rain or snow melt causing the potential for flooding. The nutrients from these materials may be carried downstream to lakes, streams and wetlands, where they degrade water quality. ☺

Learn more about nature with a spring or summer plant walk

TAKE A GUIDED PLANT WALK IN A Minnetonka park where native plant restoration is underway. New to the series this year: lunchtime walks and a summer prairie walk. Here are a few highlights:

- Look for the early-flowering marsh marigolds at Kinsel Park (*new*)
- See more than 15 species of spring ephemeral wildflowers at Big Willow Park, including bloodroot and showy trillium
- Look for two ephemeral orchid species at Hilloway Park (*new*)
- Learn about steep slope restoration at Lake Rose Park
- Look at wildflowers in a big woods remnant at Purgatory Park
- Look at a floodplain forest and walk in an oak woodland to look for large-flowered bellwort and baneberry plants in the Civic Center Campus woods.
- Identify prairie flowers and grasses in Lone Lake Park in August (*new*)

Learn about restoration practices the city is using and learn to identify a few invasive species, too. RSVP is required and limited to 15 for each walk. Call Minnetonka Public Works at (952) 988-8400 or register online at www.eminnetonka.com.

- Rain or shine: wear appropriate outdoor clothing and sturdy footwear
- Recommended: water bottle and a camera.
- All walks are on Thursdays, except Wednesday, May 18.
- Two walks are scheduled over lunch, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please be on time so everyone can leave as a group, but it's okay to leave early. ☺

Park	Date (Thursdays except May 18)	Time	Meeting Place
Kinsel	April 28	5:30–7:30 p.m.	Main parking lot at 14017 Kinsel Road. Bring boots for walking in the wet. Some boots will be provided.
Big Willow	May 5	11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Small parking lot on Minnetonka Blvd. Overflow parking is across the street to the east at Guillian Park.
Hilloway	May 12	5:30–7:30 p.m.	Meet at the south end of the park at the Sylvan Road dead end. Be considerate of neighbors: please park on the west side of Sylvan Road.
Lake Rose	May 18	11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Park entrance is a city strip of land between 5724 and 5732 Lake Rose Drive. Be considerate of neighbors: please park on the east side of the street and meet between the houses.
Purgatory	May 26	5:30–7:30 p.m.	Park address: 17315 Excelsior Blvd. Meet at the picnic shelter near the main parking lot.
Civic Center	June 9	Time TBD	Native Plant Market & Eco Fun Fest. See the June <i>Minnetonka Memo</i> .
Lone Lake	August 4	5:30–7:30 p.m.	Meet at the small Rowland Road parking lot. Parking is limited, so consider walking, biking or carpooling.



Help monitor Minnetonka's wetlands

IF YOU HAVE EVER WANTED TO WADE IN a wetland or discover the plants and animals that live in the murky shallows, we want you! The city of Minnetonka has partnered with Hennepin County for the tenth year to implement the Wetland Health Evaluation Program (WHEP) within the city. This project uses biological criteria to identify the health of different wetlands within our community.

Adult volunteers work in the field on a team with other city residents to study the biological health of Minnetonka's wetlands. You do not need a science background

or any previous monitoring experience to participate. Volunteers work under the direction of a team leader and receive training on wetland monitoring protocols as well as plant and insect identification. The time commitment is about 40–50 hours total from May through August. This includes training, fieldwork and lab work. All equipment is provided (some waders may be available). Just show up and learn!

If you are interested in volunteering for the Minnetonka WHEP, contact Aaron Schwartz, natural resource specialist, at (952) 988-8422 or at aschwartz@eminnetonka.com.



Stop pruning oaks now: avoid oak wilt

APRIL MARKS THE TIME WHEN YOU MUST stop pruning oak trees in order to avoid fatal oak wilt disease. If you need to remove a living oak tree from April through October, it's important to spray the top of the stump immediately. Sap beetles that carry oak wilt spores on their bodies are attracted to the scent of freshly cut oaks, and the paint creates a barrier so that spores cannot be transmitted through the stump into the roots. Remember, new oak wilt disease sites start with a cut to an oak during the high-risk season, but oak wilt is spread and persists in neighborhoods primarily through shared root systems of nearby oak trees.



Keep in mind that November through March is the best time to prune your oak trees. This is also the best time to prune other trees, since insects and diseases are not active.

Oak wilt researchers break up the calendar year into three sections based on the risk of oaks contracting the disease if they are pruned or wounded by storms:

- **April, May, and June:** high risk
- **July – October:** low risk (but remember, low risk doesn't mean no risk!)
- **November – March:** no risk/safe

If you have questions about oak wilt disease, contact Emily Ball, city forester, at (952) 988-8400.

Pick up pre-ordered rain barrels, compost bins April 15 and 16

IF YOU ORDERED A RAIN barrel or compost bin through the Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM), don't forget to pick it up. Check your receipt or order confirmation for the correct pick up location and dates and bring your receipt with you to the pickup site. You must pick up your barrels or bins at the location you



selected when you ordered. No refunds are available. Questions? Visit www.recycleminnesota.org or call (651) 641-4589.

Pickup dates are Friday and Saturday, April 15 & 16, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at Minnetonka Public Works,



11522 Minnetonka Boulevard (enter at the east driveway).

Note: No rain barrels or compost bins will be sold at the pickup event. All sales are pre-order only through RAM. If you would like to order a barrel or bin, please check www.recycleminnesota.org for availability and pickup locations.

Don't leaf it alone — recycle leaves

USED PROPERLY, THE LEAVES FROM deciduous trees can provide a valuable source of organic material for landscapes. Organic material enhances soil quality, and thereby your plant's health, by improving water and nutrient holding capacity along with supporting soil organisms.

Here are the top three ways to "leaf-cycle."

Spread a thin layer of leaves in the woods.

- Woodlands naturally tend to contain more organic material than a lawn if leaves, branches and trees are left to decompose on their own.
- Avoid piles — they don't decompose properly and may smother desirable plants.

Mulch leaves into the lawn

- Recent research has shown mulching leaves is an economical way to dispose of leaves and does not negatively affect lawn health. Save money on compostable bags and time on raking.
- Chop your leaves back into the turf regularly as they drop throughout autumn. It isn't necessary to own a mulching mower — follow

manufacturer's guidelines to remove the bag from your rotary mower.

- Ensure lawn and leaves are dry and the mower blade is sharp for best results.
- If you have more than five inches of leaves, you may need to raise the blade on your mower. If grass blades are not visible after the first pass, you may need to slow down your mowing speed or make multiple passes to process the leaves.

Use the free city leaf drop or yard waste bin from your hauler

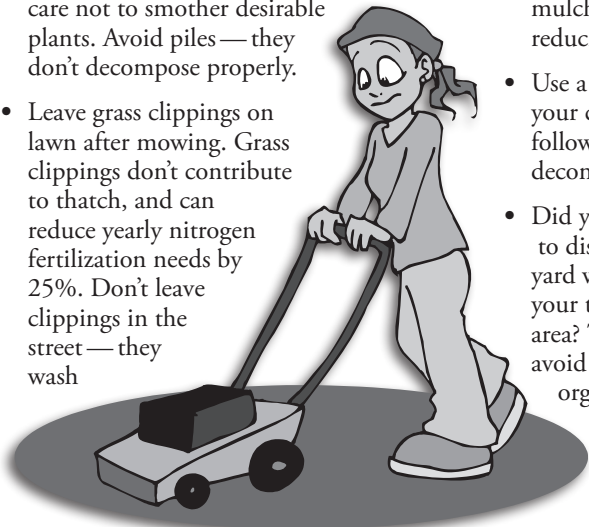
- The city offers residents several convenient spring and fall leaf drops. See p. 7 of this *Memo* or visit www.eminnetonka.com.
- This is a great way to handle the extra leaves that you cannot process back into your landscape.
- Did you know the days of black plastic lawn and leaf bags are a thing of the past if you use curbside yard waste collection? A new law requires you to place yard wastes in compostable bags. Check with your waste hauler or www.eminnetonka.com for details. ♻️

Just say "mow" to bagging

SAVE TIME AND MONEY BY RE-USING grass clippings. Lawn clippings are a valuable source of organic nutrients, especially nitrogen, for your yard. As clippings decompose, nutrients are released and available for your grass or other plants.

Here are the top uses for your lawn clippings, along with a few pointers:

- Spread a thin layer in the woods, taking care not to smother desirable plants. Avoid piles — they don't decompose properly.
- Leave grass clippings on lawn after mowing. Grass clippings don't contribute to thatch, and can reduce yearly nitrogen fertilization needs by 25%. Don't leave clippings in the street — they wash



into storm drains and end up in the nearest wetland, lake or creek, where they release nutrients that contribute to poor water quality.

- Use clippings as mulch by spreading between rows of flower beds (or veggies — but only if you haven't used chemicals on your lawn). Clippings break down more rapidly than wood-based mulch and help shade the soil surface, reducing moisture loss.
- Use a small amount as green material in your compost bin, but ensure you are following an appropriate ratio for best decomposition.
- Did you know that it is illegal to dispose of grass clippings, leaves, and yard wastes with household waste (in your trash bin) in the Twin Cities metro area? The purpose of the 1990 law is to avoid filling up landfills with valuable organic materials that are completely recyclable. ♻️

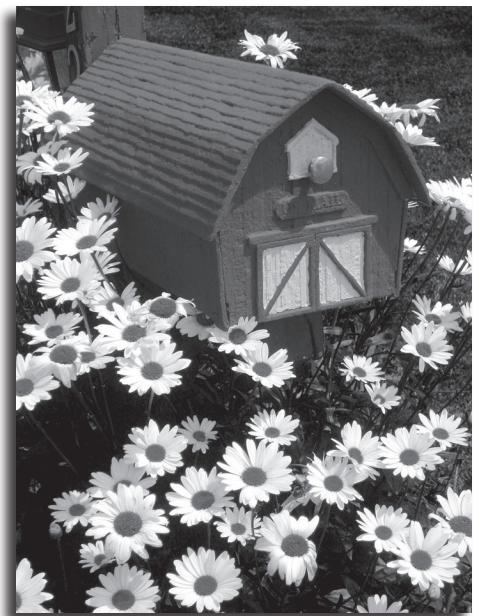
Help keep our waters clean

AS THE RAIN WASHES AWAY THE LAST remnants of snow this spring, think about where the water from your yard travels. Water flowing across lawns, driveways and other surfaces can pick up any loose soil particles, chemicals, debris or other materials that it encounters. Most runoff that enters the street or storm drain is directed into the nearest wetland, lake or creek. Any materials in that runoff can collect in the water and harm native plant and animal species, release nutrients that can promote the growth of algae and weeds and make the water unsightly with debris.

Help protect water quality this spring by keeping leaves, grass clippings, pet waste and other debris out of the streets and storm drains. Clean up spills from automotive fluids, cleaning compounds, fertilizers, pesticides or other chemicals and dispose of them properly. Also, look for ways to reduce runoff in your yard. Although you may not see it from your window, when it comes to water quality, we all live on a lake, creek or wetland. ♻️

Get your cameras ready for spring!

SPRING BRINGS A HOST OF NATURAL wonders: make sure to capture them by taking photos: those taken in Minnetonka may be entered in the 2011 Photo Contest this fall! Stay tuned for details later this year. ♻️



2010 Photo Contest: "Mailbox Daisy,"
Lisa Schmid

Stretching your landscape dollar

DO YOU KNOW WHAT LANDSCAPE treasures you have in your yard? One of the greatest sources for landscaping materials can be on your own property. Before you start your next landscape or planting project, think about how you can reuse the materials you have to save money and minimize waste.

Reuse your turf

Established lawn grass is easy to transplant to other areas in your yard. For small projects, like planting a tree, existing turf can easily be removed with a flat-head shovel and used to patch a bare spot in your lawn. For larger jobs (such as a new garden) consider renting a sod cutter. Sod rolls or pieces can be stored in the shade for a day or two if kept moist, but should be used as quickly as possible. Press any sod firmly into the soil for good contact and water well until rooted.

Keep your topsoil

Topsoil contain much of the nutrients, water, oxygen and microorganisms that help plants, including lawns, thrive. It should be the uppermost layer of soil in your yard and is generally darker (usually dark brown) than the paler (often tan-colored) subsoil below due to accumulation of organic material. It is typically several inches thick but can vary, especially if the soil has been previously disturbed.

If you need to dig in your yard, keep your topsoil pile separate from your subsoil and cover it with a tarp so that it stays dry until you are ready to spread it. Avoid working wet topsoil to prevent compaction. Be wary of spreading topsoil that may contain plants or seeds that you may not want growing in your new area.

Salvage your plants

Many plants can survive transplanting and some species that grow in clumps can be divided to cover a larger area. Use a trowel or shovel to minimize damage to the root system and water well after replanting. Some plants may be potted in containers if you need some time before you can replant. If you have no use for your plants, consider offering them to a neighbor or holding a "plant salvage" party. Learn about specific transplanting recommendations before moving plants you cherish, as some species may benefit from specific techniques or timing. ♻️

Got trees? Re-use your wood debris

WHEN YOU PRUNE OR CUT DOWN TREES on your property, or when your trees sustain storm damage, or when you remove invasive species, what do you do with the wood waste? Do you pay someone to haul it away? Whether you do the work yourself or hire a professional, wood can be re-used and recycled without removing it from your property. Here are some wood waste re-uses to benefit your landscape.

Chip brush

Consider renting a chipper and put the wood you removed right back into your landscape. Here's where you can use your chips:

- Around your landscape trees (Make a mulch ring in the shape of a dish, not a volcano, to the drip-line, then let the turf decompose under many layers of newspaper with 3 inches of chips on top.)
- In the woods, taking care not to smother desirable plants. Spread mulch when the soil is firm or frozen, since activity on moist soil causes compaction.
- Around landscape beds and wooded edges. Spread the chips up to 3 inches thick. Add more over time as they break down.
- Can't chip on site? Bring your brush to the Public Works brush drop and the city will recycle it for you.



Use logs and debris on slopes

Wood waste can provide a big benefit to erodible slopes. Instead of chipping the logs, lay them horizontally on the slope. Place the logs properly for full benefit.

- Full soil contact is best for trapping silt and leaves in rainstorms. This requires removing most of the limbs from the logs.

Soil don'ts

- Never stockpile soil in the street.
- Avoid storing soil piles near a storm drain or on paved surfaces that drain to the street. Even if covered by a tarp, rainfall can wash the soil into the stormwater system and cause water quality problems in wetlands, lakes and creeks. ♻️

- Place logs perpendicular to the down-slope flow of water.
- Prevent logs from rolling by placing them on the uphill side of stumps or pound wooden stakes on the downhill side. Create your own stakes with branch limbs.
- Small branches work too, as long as they have soil contact.

Cut-slash method

If you don't have time to cut up logs and brush for full soil contact, consider the "cut-slash" method where you rough-cut the wood into pieces to decompose in the woods. The city uses this technique in some park habitats. It can look messy, so follow these tips:

- Keep slash deeper or farther in the woods, away from sight lines
- Make rows of slash by piling brush neatly, then cut through the piles with a chainsaw every one to two feet. Spread the slash on the steepest slopes and throughout the woods, taking care not to smother desirable plants.
- Note: brush piles are not permitted by city ordinance, so slash it or haul it away to the brush drop.

Use firewood on site

You can also use the logs and branches for firewood. If you're burning wood outside, be sure you have a recreational fire permit from the Minnetonka Fire Department. Use wood at home to prevent the inadvertent transport of insects and disease. If you have a diseased elm or oak, ask a professional for proper disposal procedure.

Don't throw it all away — compost!

COMPOSTING IS A GREAT WAY TO convert kitchen food scraps, garden weeds, green trimmings and other yard waste into a rich soil amendment that can add nutrients and hold moisture in your soil. It's easy to do if you follow a few easy steps for success.

Buy or make a compost bin

Build your own bin from untreated scrap lumber, old pallets, wire fencing or concrete blocks. See "build your own bin" designs and instructions at www.reduce.org (click on composting). Commercial bins are typically plastic and can be found in hardware and lawn and garden stores or garden catalogs. The three-box wood bin is a classic structure that withstands the test of time. If you come to love composting, work your way up to this model. See a design for the ultimate wood bin on the city website at www.eminnetonka.com (search "composting").

Once you have your bin, locate it on level ground away from lakes, creeks and wetlands to help protect these waters from the leaching of excess nutrients. Be considerate and avoid locating it outside of your neighbor's window, deck, patio or other similar high-use area.

What can you compost?

Use a combination of "greens" and "browns." Greens are high in nitrogen and browns are high in carbon. For best breakdown of compost there needs to be a balance of carbon and nitrogen with proper air and moisture (that's where the turning comes in).

- Green materials include kitchen fruit and vegetable peels and scraps, grass clippings, freshly dug weeds like dandelions, green leaves, cut up house plants, coffee grounds, teabags and hair. Aquatic plants are high in nitrogen, too.
- Brown materials include brown leaves, dead grass, straw, cut up perennial stalks, twigs, woodchips and sawdust. Be careful with the latter three — too much carbon can slow the breakdown process. Shredded newspaper works when you may be short on browns in mid-summer.
- Size matters. The smaller the pieces, the faster the materials will compost with adequate moisture and air.
- **Don't** compost meat, dairy products, fats, animal waste, treated wood, diseased plant material or weed seeds. Discard these items in the trash.

Layer the pile

Lay a 4" base of brown material including crossed sticks or perennial stalks that will

allow air spaces at the bottom of the heap. Alternate layers of greens and browns. Sprinkle water on the brown layers (the green layers usually have plenty of moisture). If you use grass clippings, layer them thinly so they don't clump into globs.

What else is needed?

- A little soil, which contains a plethora of bacteria and microorganisms. Sprinkle a small layer of soil in your compost layers. If you are digging weeds, the soil on the weed roots is all you need.
- Add water to each brown layer. Keep the pile moist but not soggy.
- After your initial layering, the pile will shrink as it decomposes. It needs air and must be turned. A four-pronged garden fork works great. A pitchfork and shovel work, too. While turning, recycle your cardboard tubes from paper towel and toilet paper rolls. The cylinders add air space to the pile and will decompose, too.

How does breakdown occur?

Soil critters do the work: bacteria, fungi, many small invertebrates, worms, ants and beetles. The material break-down process can be fast or slow. Quick decomposition can happen when the proper balance of brown and green materials are layered, together with proper moisture and aeration. The more you turn, the faster it decomposes. Once per week is a good target but not essential. Slow breakdown can take six months to a year due to an improper balance of ingredients and lack of turning the material.

What about winter?

It's not necessary to stop composting simply because the pile is frozen. In fact, the freeze-thaw process helps break down plant tissues, so the pile can quickly start to process as soon as it is turned, layered and aerated in the spring. So pile on the kitchen scraps!

Temperature

Don't worry if your pile doesn't heat up. Most small piles don't get hot, but compost still happens. Do keep turning and watering.

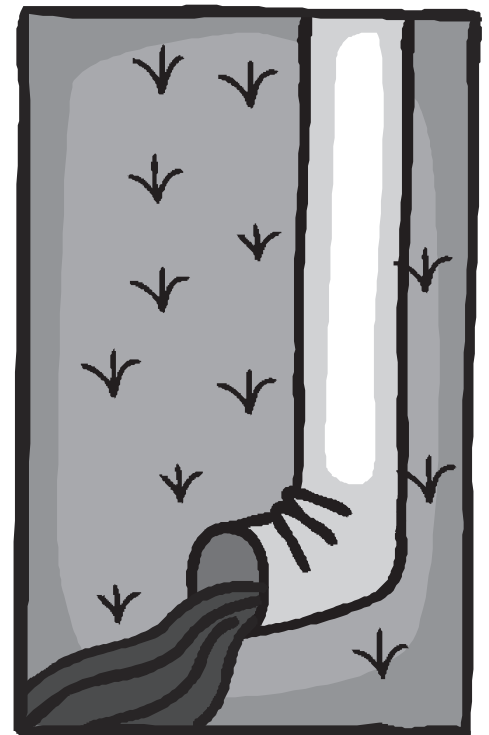
Compost uses

- A "top dressing" is compost spread over the top of the soil. It is great for perennials and hostas. Try to rake it into the soil a bit.
- A "soil amendment" is added to existing soil in gardens and landscape plantings. Add compost when you are planting new plants or moving existing plants. ☺

How to recycle rain water runoff

DO YOU KNOW THAT A 10-FOOT by 10-foot shed or patio can generate more than 60 gallons of water with only one inch of rain? Imagine how much reusable water your roof and driveway can produce. Here are some ideas for using this free water source while also helping to reduce stormwater runoff in your neighborhood.

- Rain barrels are a great way to collect rain water from your roof for watering trees, shrubs and other plants. You can buy or make your own barrel as well as connect several together for more water storage. Make certain your barrel's overflow is directed away from your home.
- Rain gardens can be used to collect water from rooftops or paved surfaces, including driveways and patios. Unlike traditional garden beds, rain gardens are constructed as shallow depressions designed to collect water and absorb it within a few hours. Select plants to make an attractive garden that requires little or no watering once established.
- Directing your downspouts into your garden beds or over your lawn can help minimize watering while keeping your plants green. Be careful not to direct runoff toward the foundation of your home or onto your neighbor's property. ☺



Stop treating soil like dirt

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE SLOGAN “let’s quit treating our soil like dirt?” It refers to the idea that soil is a valuable, dynamic system but it is often (unfairly) compared to and treated like the debris that collects in your home entry way — which is actually just dirt. Dirt doesn’t do much for us other than grime up the house.

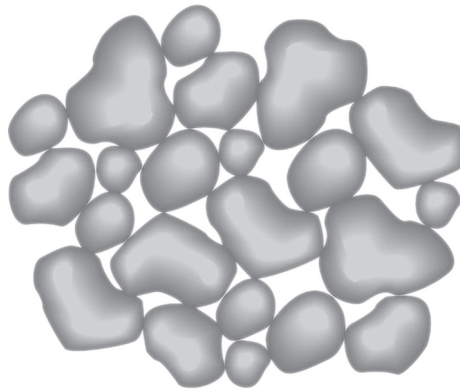
On the other hand, healthy soil is a medium for plant growth and life. It has physical, chemical and biological properties. Ever wondered why one tree takes off and the other one falters? Often the full story is happening underground at the soil level. Many declining trees and plants can be attributed to poor soil conditions which can influence how well the soil holds water to how it releases nutrients to the tree. Get the “dirt” on soil — it supports tree and plant health!

Soil is made up of mineral matter, air, water and organic material. Generally, ideal soils are composed of 45% mineral materials (sand, silt and clay); 50% pore space (air); and 5% organic matter.

- The mineral portions come from rocks that have weathered and broken down over time—and rocks are made in various ways over time from the minerals of the earth.
- The organic material comes from decomposing plants, roots, animal parts and organisms.
- Air (oxygen) can be found in the pore spaces between soil aggregates (mixture of soil parts).
- Pore spaces found in healthy soil allows plant roots to grow and move unrestricted through soil, and also allows proper water and nutrient cycling.

When exposed to time, rainfall, heating/cooling cycles and chemical/biological reactions, soil forms layers called horizons. Similar to a layered cake, each soil horizon has a different composition, from decomposing organic material, to the fine roots of trees, to very fine soil particles, to larger rocky soil particles. The composition or texture of the soil layer influences how well it holds water and provides air (primarily oxygen) to plant roots.

Sandy soils are the largest soil particles and so they have the biggest pore spaces between the sand grains. Water drains quickly through the soil—picture marbles in a glass. If you have sandy soils, you



Close up view of soil particles showing pore spaces

may need to water more often and should consider adding organic material such as leaves or mulch to help hold the water.

Clay soils are the smallest soil particles and hold on to water naturally — they have the most surface area and the most pore space, but the pore spaces can be very small and do not readily drain. If you have clay soil, overwatering of plants may lead to root rot diseases.

Check the makeup of your soil the next time you plant a tree or perennial. Dampen the soil and run it between your fingers. If it’s sticky and holds together it has quite a bit of clay. If it falls apart, it has more sand in it. If your soil feels somewhat sticky but it falls apart, it could be a silt or loam,

Mulch benefits

USE MULCH ON EXPOSED SOIL TO realize these benefits:

- Soil moisture retention
- Soil temperature buffer (keeps it cooler in the summer and insulated in winter)
- Reduced runoff and erosion
- Increased water infiltration
- Adds valuable organic matter to the soil as it breaks down
- Provides food and habitat for organisms in the food web
- Prevents new weed germination when maintained at the proper depth — about 4”

which falls in between sand and clay.

Most urban or suburban soils are considered “disturbed” soils that are low in organic material due to human activities. The physical soil structure is often compacted with few pore spaces and it has altered drainage due to grading changes from the original landscape. There may also be chemical changes to the soil such as a raised pH or barriers to water flow due to roads, utilities or building foundations. Beneficial organic material such as grass clippings, leaves or twigs is often removed. ∞

Top methods to improve your soil

- Add organic material such as leaves, mulch and grass clippings.
- Avoid compacting soil (pore spaces) with equipment, foot traffic when soil is wet, or piles of construction debris, rocks or soil.
- Keep soil covered. Avoid bare soil to reduce soil erosion by wind and water action.
- Diversify the plants and trees in your landscape. Each provides a unique root structure and type of residue to the soil, which will support varying types of soil organisms.



Soil compaction takes away pore spaces