

## Description

A BMP that utilizes bioretention is an engineered, depressed landscape area designed to capture and filter or infiltrate the water quality capture volume (WQCV). BMPs that utilize bioretention are frequently referred to as rain gardens or porous landscape detention areas (PLDs). The term PLD is common in the UDFCD region as this manual first published the BMP by this name in 1999. In an effort to be consistent with terms most prevalent in the stormwater industry, this document generally refers to the treatment process as *bioretention* and to the BMP as a *rain garden*.



**Photograph B-1.** This recently constructed rain garden provides bioretention of pollutants, as well as an attractive amenity for a residential building. Treatment should improve as vegetation matures.

The design of a rain garden may provide detention for events exceeding that of the WQCV. There are generally two ways to achieve this. The design can provide the flood control volume above the WQCV or the design can provide and slowly release the flood control volume in an area downstream of one or more rain gardens. See the *Storage* chapter in Volume 2 of the USDCM for more information.

This infiltrating BMP requires consultation with a geotechnical engineer when proposed adjacent to a structure. A geotechnical engineer can assist with evaluating the suitability of soils, identifying potential impacts, and establishing minimum distances between the BMP and structures.

### Terminology

The term *bioretention* refers to the treatment process although it is also frequently used to describe a BMP that provides biological uptake and retention of the pollutants found in stormwater runoff. This BMP is sometimes referred to as a *porous landscape detention (PLD) area* or *rain garden*.

| Bioretention<br>(Rain Garden)   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| Functions   |                        |
| LID/Volume Red.   | Yes                    |
| WQCV Capture  | Yes                    |
| WQCV+Flood Control  | Yes                    |
| Fact Sheet Includes EURV Guidance   | No                     |
| Typical Effectiveness for Targeted Pollutants <sup>3</sup>  |                        |
| Sediment/Solids   | Very Good <sup>1</sup> |
| Nutrients   | Moderate               |
| Total Metals  | Good                   |
| Bacteria  | Moderate               |
| Other Considerations  |                        |
| Life-cycle Costs <sup>4</sup>   | Moderate               |
| <sup>1</sup> Not recommended for watersheds with high sediment yields (unless pretreatment is provided).<br><sup>3</sup> Based primarily on data from the International Stormwater BMP Database ( <a href="http://www.bmpdatabase.org">www.bmpdatabase.org</a> ).<br><sup>4</sup> Based primarily on BMP-REALCOST available at <a href="http://www.udfcd.org">www.udfcd.org</a> . Analysis based on a single installation (not based on the maximum recommended watershed tributary to each BMP). |                        |

## Site Selection

This BMP allows WQCV treatment within one or more areas designated for landscape (see design step 7 for suggested vegetation). In this way, it is an excellent alternative to extended detention basins for small sites. A typical rain garden serves a tributary area of one impervious acre or less, although they can be designed for larger tributary areas. Multiple installations can be used within larger sites. Rain gardens should not be used when a baseflow is anticipated. They are typically small and installed in locations such as:

- Parking lot islands
- Street medians
- Landscape areas between the road and a detached walk
- Planter boxes that collect roof drains

Bioretention requires a stable watershed. Retrofit applications are typically successful for this reason. When the watershed includes phased construction, sparsely vegetated areas, or steep slopes in sandy soils, consider another BMP or provide pretreatment before runoff from these areas reaches the rain garden.

The surface of the rain garden should be flat. For this reason, rain gardens can be more difficult to incorporate into steeply sloping terrain; however, terraced applications of these facilities have been successful in other parts of the country.

When bioretention (and other BMPs used for infiltration) are located adjacent to buildings or pavement areas, protective measures should be implemented to avoid adverse impacts to these structures. Oversaturated subgrade soil underlying a structure can cause the structure to settle or result in moisture-related problems. Wetting of expansive soils or bedrock can cause swelling, resulting in structural movements. A geotechnical engineer should evaluate the potential impact of the BMP on adjacent structures based on an evaluation of the subgrade soil, groundwater, and bedrock conditions at the site. Additional minimum requirements include:

- In locations where subgrade soils do not allow infiltration and/or where infiltration could adversely impact adjacent structures, include a drainage layer (with underdrain) under the growing medium.
- In locations where potentially expansive soils or bedrock exist, placement of a rain garden adjacent to structures and pavement should only be considered if the BMP includes a drainage layer (with underdrain) and an impermeable geomembrane liner designed to restrict seepage.

## Benefits

- Bioretention uses multiple treatment processes to remove pollutants, including sedimentation, filtering, adsorption, evapotranspiration, and biological uptake of constituents.
- Stormwater treatment occurs within attractive landscaped areas.
- There is a potential reduction of irrigation requirements by taking advantage of site runoff.

## Limitations

- Additional design and construction steps are required for placement of any ponding or infiltration area near or upgradient from a building foundation and/or when expansive (low to high swell) soils exist. This is discussed in the design procedure section.
- In developing or otherwise erosive watersheds, high sediment loads can clog the facility.

## Designing for Maintenance

Recommended maintenance practices for all BMPs are in Chapter 6 of this manual. During design, consider the following to ensure ease of maintenance over the long-term:

- Do not put a filter sock on the underdrain. This is not necessary and can cause the underdrain to clog.
- The best surface cover for a rain garden is full vegetation. Use rock mulch sparingly within the rain garden because rock mulch limits infiltration and is more difficult to maintain. Wood mulch handles sediment build-up better than rock mulch; however, wood mulch floats and may clog the overflow depending on the configuration of the outlet or settle unevenly. Some municipalities may not allow wood mulch for this reason.
- Consider all potential maintenance requirements such as mowing (if applicable) and replacement of the growing medium. Consider the method and equipment for each task required. For example, in a large rain garden where the use of hand tools is not feasible, does the shape and configuration of the rain garden allow for removal of the growing medium using a backhoe?
- Provide pre-treatment when it will reduce the extent and frequency of maintenance necessary to maintain function over the life of the BMP. For example, if the tributary is larger than one acre, prone to debris or the use of sand for ice control, consider a small forebay.
- Make the rain garden as shallow as possible. Increasing the depth unnecessarily can create erosive side slopes and complicate maintenance. Shallow rain gardens are also more attractive.
- Design and adjust the irrigation system (temporary or permanent) to provide appropriate water for the establishment and maintenance of selected vegetation.

### Is Pretreatment Needed?

Designing the inflow gutter to the rain garden at a minimal slope of 0.5% can facilitate sediment and debris deposition prior to flows entering the BMP. Be aware, this will reduce maintenance of the BMP, but may require more frequent sweeping of the gutter to ensure that the sediment does not impede flow into the rain garden.

## Design Procedure and Criteria

1. **Subsurface Exploration and Determination of a No-Infiltration, Partial Infiltration, or Full Infiltration Section:** Infiltration BMPs can have three basic types of sections. The appropriate section will depend on land use and activities, proximity to adjacent structures and soil characteristics. Sections of each installation type are shown in Figure B-1.
  - **No-Infiltration Section:** This section includes an underdrain and an impermeable liner that prevents infiltration of stormwater into the subgrade soils. Consider using this section when any of the following conditions exist:
    - The site is a stormwater hotspot and infiltration could result in contamination of groundwater.
    - The site is located over contaminated soils and infiltration could mobilize these contaminants.
    - The facility is located over potentially expansive soils or bedrock that could swell due to infiltration and potentially damage adjacent structures (e.g., building foundation or pavement).
  - **Partial Infiltration Section:** This section does not include an impermeable liner, and allows some infiltration. Stormwater that does not infiltrate is collected and removed by an underdrain

system.

- **Full Infiltration Section:** This section is designed to infiltrate the water stored in the basin into the subgrade below. UDFCD recommends a minimum infiltration rate of 2 times the rate needed to drain the WQCV over 12 hours. A conservative design could utilize the partial infiltration section with the addition of a valve at the underdrain outlet. In the event that infiltration does not remain adequate following construction, the valve could be opened and allow this section to operate as a partial infiltration section.

A geotechnical engineer should scope and perform a subsurface study. Typical geotechnical investigation needed to select and design the section includes:

- Prior to exploration review geologic and geotechnical information to assess near-surface soil, bedrock and groundwater conditions that may be encountered and anticipated ranges of infiltration rate for those materials. For example, if the facility is located adjacent to a structure and the site is located in a general area of known shallow, potentially expansive bedrock, a no-infiltration section will likely be required. It is also possible that this BMP may be infeasible, even with a liner, if there is a significant potential for damage to the adjacent structures (e.g., areas of dipping bedrock).
- Drill exploratory borings or exploratory pits to characterize subsurface conditions beneath the subgrade and develop requirements for subgrade preparation. Drill at least one boring or pit for every 40,000 ft<sup>2</sup>, and at least two borings or pits for sites between 10,000 ft<sup>2</sup> and 40,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. The boring or pit should extend at least 5 feet below the bottom of the base, and at least 20 feet in areas where there is a potential of encountering potentially expansive soils or bedrock. More borings or pits at various depths may be required by the geotechnical engineer in areas where soil types may change, in low-lying areas where subsurface drainage may collect, or where the water table is likely within 8 feet below the planned bottom of the base or top of subgrade. Installation of temporary monitoring wells in selected borings or pits for monitoring groundwater levels over time should be considered where shallow groundwater is encountered.
- Perform laboratory tests on samples obtained from the borings or pits to initially characterize the subgrade, evaluate the possible section type, and to assess subgrade conditions for supporting traffic loads. Consider the following tests: moisture content (ASTM D 2216); dry density (ASTM D 2936); Atterberg limits (ASTM D 4318); gradation (ASTM D 6913); swell-consolidation (ASTM D 4546); subgrade support testing (R-value, CBR or unconfined compressive strength); and hydraulic conductivity. A geotechnical engineer should determine the appropriate test method based on the soil type.
- For sites where a full infiltration section may be feasible, perform on-site infiltration tests using a double-ring infiltrometer (ASTM D 3385). Perform at least one test for every 160,000 ft<sup>2</sup> and at least two tests for sites between 40,000 ft<sup>2</sup> and 160,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. The tests should be located near completed borings or pits so the test results and subsurface conditions encountered in the borings can be compared, and at least one test should be located near the boring or pit showing the most unfavorable infiltration condition. The test should be performed at the planned top of subgrade underlying the growing media.
- Be aware that actual infiltration rates are highly variable dependent on soil type, density and moisture content and degree of compaction as well as other environmental and construction influences. Actual rates can differ an order of magnitude or more from those indicated by infiltration or permeability testing. Select the type of section based on careful assessment of the subsurface exploration and testing data.

The following steps outline the design procedure and criteria, with Figure B-1 providing a corresponding cross-section.

2. **Basin Storage Volume:** Provide a storage volume based on a 12-hour drain time.

Find the required WQCV (watershed inches of runoff). Using the imperviousness of the tributary area (or effective imperviousness where LID elements are used upstream), use Figure 3-2 located in Chapter 3 of this manual to determine the WQCV based on a 12-hour drain time.

Calculate the design volume as follows:

$$V = \left[ \frac{\text{WQCV}}{12} \right] A \quad \text{Equation B-1}$$

Where:

$V$  = design volume (ft<sup>3</sup>)

$A$  = area of watershed tributary to the rain garden (ft<sup>2</sup>)

3. **Basin Geometry:** UDFCD recommends a maximum WQCV ponding depth of 12 inches to maintain vegetation properly. Provide an inlet or other means of overflow at this elevation. Depending on the type of vegetation planted, a greater depth may be utilized to detain larger (more infrequent) events. The bottom surface of the rain garden, also referred to here as the filter area, should be flat. Sediment will reside on the filter area of the rain garden; therefore, if the filter area is too small, it may clog prematurely. If the filter area is not flat, the lowest area of the filter is more likely to clog as it will have a higher sediment loading. Increasing the filter area will reduce clogging and decrease the frequency of maintenance. Equation B-2 provides a minimum filter area allowing for some of the volume to be stored beyond the area of the filter (i.e., above the sideslopes of the rain garden).

Note that the total surcharge volume provided by the design must also equal or exceed the design volume. Where needed to meet the the required volume, also consider the porosity of the media at 14 percent. Use vertical walls or slope the sides of the basin to achieve the required volume. Sideslopes should be no steeper than 4:1 (horizontal:vertical).

$$A_F = 0.02AI \quad \text{Equation B-2}$$

Where:

$A_F$  = minimum (flat) filter area (ft<sup>2</sup>)

$A$  = area tributary to the rain garden (ft<sup>2</sup>)

$I$  = imperviousness of area tributary to the rain garden (percent expressed as a decimal)

4. **Growing Medium:** Provide a minimum of 18 inches of growing medium to enable establishment of the roots of the vegetation (see Figure B-1). A previous version of this manual specified a mixture consisting of 85% coarse sand and a 15% compost/shredded paper mixture (by volume). Based on field monitoring of this medium, compost was removed to reduce export of nutrients and fines and silts were added to both benefit the vegetation and increase capture of metals in stormwater.

Table B-1 specifies the growing media as well as other materials discussed in this Fact Sheet. Growing media is engineered media that requires a high level of quality control and must almost always be imported. Obtaining a particle size distribution and nutrient analysis is the only way to ensure that the media is acceptable. UDFCD has identified placement of media not meeting the specification as the most frequent cause of failure. Sample the media after delivery and prior to placement or obtain a sample from the supplier in advance of delivery and placement and have this analyzed prior to delivery.

#### **Other Rain Garden Growing Medium Amendments**

The specified growing medium was designed for filtration ability, clogging characteristics, and vegetative health. It is important to preserve the function provided by the rain garden growing medium when considering additional materials for incorporation into the growing medium or into the standard section shown in Figure B-1. When desired, amendments may be included to improve water quality or to benefit vegetative health as long as they do not add nutrients, pollutants, or modify the infiltration rate. For example, a number of products, including steel wool, capture and retain dissolved phosphorus (Erickson 2009). When phosphorus is a target pollutant, proprietary materials with similar characteristics may be considered. Do not include amendments such as top soil, sandy loam, and compost.

**Table B-1. Material specification for bioretention/rain garden facilities**

| Material                                     | Specification   | Submittals   | Testing                      | Notes  |
|--|---|--|------------------------------|--|
| Bioretention Growing Media (soil + organics) | Bioretention soil   | Particle size distribution and nutrient analysis required. |                              | Percentages are in weight.   |
|  | Particle size distribution:<br>80-90% sand (0.05 - 2.0 mm diameter)<br>3-17% silt (0.002-0.5 mm diameter)<br>3-17% clay (<0.002 diameter)<br>Chemical attribute and nutrient analysis:<br>pH 6.8 - 7.5<br>organic matter < 15%<br>nitrogen < 15 ppm<br>phosphorus < 15 ppm<br>salinity < 6 mmhos/cm |  |                              |  |
| Bioretention organics                        | 3 to 5% shredded mulch (by weight of growing media)   |  |                              | bioretention soil required. Aged 6 months (minimum).<br>Aged 6 months (minimum). No weed fabric allowed.   |
| Landscape mulch                              | Shredded hardwood   |  |                              |  |
| Underdrain aggregate                         | COOT filter material (Class B or C as specified)  | Mass Percent Passing Square Mesh Sieve                     |                              |  |
|  |   | Sieve Size   | Class B                      | Class C  |
|  |   | 37.5 mm (1.5")   | 100                          | 100  |
|  |   | 19.0 mm (0.75")  |                              | 100  |
|  |   | 4.75 mm (No. 4)  | 20-60                        | 60-100   |
|  |   | 1.18 mm (No. 16)   | 10-30                        |  |
|  |   | 300 um (No. 50)  | 0-10                         | 10-30  |
|  |   | 150 um (No. 100)   |                              | 0-10   |
|  |   | 75 um (No. 200)  | 0-3                          | 0-3  |
| Underdrain Pipe                              | Pipe diameter and type  | Maximum slot width (inches)                                | Minimum open area (per foot) |  |
|  |   | 0.032  | 1.90 in. <sup>2</sup>        |  |
|  | 4-inch slotted PVC  | 0.032  | 1.98 in. <sup>2</sup>        | Pipe must conform to requirements of ASTM designation F949. There shall be no evidence of splitting, cracking, or breaking when the pipe is tested per ASTM test method D2412 in accordance with F949 section 7.5 and ASTM F794 section 8.5. |
| Impermeable liner                            |   | Thickness 0.76 mm (30 mil)                                 | Test method                  |  |
|  |   | +/-5   | ASTM D 1593                  |  |
|  | Thickness, % Tolerance  | 12.25 (70)   | ASTM D8 82, method B         |  |
|  | Tensile strength, kN/m (lbf/in)   | 5.25 (30)  | ASTM D8 82, method B         |  |
|  | Modulus at 100% elongation, kN/m  | 350  | ASTM D8 82, method A         |  |
|  | Ultimate elongation, %  | 38 (8.5)   | ASTM D 1004                  |  |
|  | Tear resistance, N/lbs  | -29 (-20)  | ASTM D 1790                  |  |
|  | Low temperature impact, °C (°F)   | 0.7  | ASTM D8 82, method A         |  |
|  | Volatiles loss, % maximum   | 1 (max)  | N/A                          |  |
|  | Pinholes, no. per 8 m <sup>2</sup> (no. per 10 yd. <sup>2</sup> )   | 80   | N/A                          |  |
|  | Bonded seam strength, % of tensile  |  |                              |  |
|  |   |  |                              | Thermal welding required for fully lined facilities (not a curtain). Leak testing in the field required.   |

5. **Underdrain System:** When using an underdrain system, provide a control orifice sized to drain the design volume in 12 hours or more (see Equation B-3). Use a minimum orifice size of 3/8 inch to avoid clogging. This will provide detention and slow release of the WQCV, providing water quality benefits and reducing impacts to downstream channels. Space underdrain pipes a maximum of 20 feet on center. Provide cleanouts to enable maintenance of the underdrain. Cleanouts can also be used to conduct an inspection (by camera) of the underdrain system to ensure that the pipe was not crushed or disconnected during construction.

Calculate the diameter of the orifice for a 12-hour drain time using Equation B-3 (Use a minimum orifice size of 3/8 inch to avoid clogging.):

$$D_{12 \text{ hour drain time}} = \sqrt{\frac{V}{1414 y^{0.41}}} \quad \text{Equation B-3}$$

Where:

- $D$  = orifice diameter (in)
- $y$  = distance from the lowest elevation of the storage volume (i.e., surface of the filter) to the center of the orifice (ft)
- $V$  = volume (WQCV or the portion of the WQCV in the rain garden) to drain in 12 hours (ft<sup>3</sup>)

In previous versions of this manual, UDFCD recommended that the underdrain be placed in an aggregate layer and that a geotextile (separator fabric) be placed between this aggregate and the growing medium. This version of the manual replaces that section with materials that, when used together, eliminate the need for a separator fabric.

The underdrain system should be placed within an 6-inch-thick section of CDOT Class B or Class C filter material meeting the gradation in Table B-1. Use slotted pipe that meets the slot dimensions provided in Table B-3.



## 6. Impermeable Geomembrane Liner and Geotextile Separator Fabric:

For no-infiltration sections, install a 30 mil (minimum) PVC geomembrane liner, per Table B-1, on the bottom and sides of the basin, extending up at least to the top of the underdrain layer. Provide at least 9 inches (12 inches if possible) of cover over the membrane where it is attached to the wall to protect the membrane from UV deterioration. The geomembrane should be field-seamed using a dual track welder, which allows for non-destructive testing of almost all field seams. A small amount of single track is allowed in limited areas to seam around pipe perforations, to patch seams removed for destructive seam testing, and for limited repairs. The liner should be installed with slack to prevent tearing due to backfill, compaction, and settling. Place CDOT Class B geotextile separator fabric above the geomembrane to protect it from being punctured during the placement of the filter material above the liner. If the subgrade contains angular rocks or other material that could puncture the geomembrane, smooth-roll the surface to create a suitable surface. If smooth-rolling the surface does not provide a suitable surface, also place the separator fabric between the geomembrane and the underlying subgrade. This should only be done when necessary because fabric placed under the geomembrane can increase seepage losses through pinholes or other geomembrane defects. Connect the geomembrane to perimeter concrete walls around the basin perimeter, creating a watertight seal between the geomembrane and the walls using a continuous batten bar and anchor connection (see Figure B-3). Where the need for the impermeable membrane is not as critical, the membrane can be attached with a nitrile-based vinyl adhesive. Use watertight PVC boots for underdrain pipe penetrations through the liner (see Figure B-2) or the technique shown in photo B-3.



**Photograph B-2.** The impermeable membrane in this photo has ripped from the bolts due to placement of the media without enough slack in the membrane.



**Photograph B-3.** Ensure a water-tight connection where the underdrain penetrated the liner. The heat-welded “boot” shown here is an alternative to the clamped detail shown in Figure B-2.

**Table B-2. Physical requirements for separator fabric<sup>1</sup>**

| Property                                  | Class B  |                               | Test Method |
|---|--|-------------------------------|-------------|
|   | Elongation < 50% <sup>2</sup>                              | Elongation > 50% <sup>2</sup> |             |
| Grab Strength, N (lbs.)                   | 800 (180)  | 510 (115)                     | ASTM D 4632 |
| Puncture Resistance, N (lbs.)             | 310 (70)   | 180 (40)                      | ASTM D 4833 |
| Trapezoidal Tear Strength, N (lbs.)       | 310 (70)   | 180 (40)                      | ASTM D 4533 |
| Apparent Opening Size, mm (US Sieve Size) | AOS < 0.3mm (US Sieve Size No. 50)                         |                               | ASTM D 4751 |
| Permittivity, sec <sup>-1</sup>           | 0.02 default value, must also be greater than that of soil |                               | ASTM D 4491 |
| Permeability, cm/sec                      | k fabric > k soil for all classes                          |                               | ASTM D 4491 |
| Ultraviolet Degradation at 500 hours      | 50% strength retained for all classes                      |                               | ASTM D 4355 |

<sup>1</sup> Strength values are in the weaker principle direction

<sup>2</sup> As measured in accordance with ASTM D 4632

7. **Inlet and Outlet Control:** In order to provide the proper drain time, the bioretention area can be restricted at the underdrain outlet with an orifice plate or can be designed without an underdrain (provided the subgrade meets the requirements above). Equation B-3 is a simplified equation for sizing an orifice plate for a 12-hour drain time. UD-BMP or UD-Detention, available at [www.udfcd.org](http://www.udfcd.org), also perform this calculation.

How flow enters and exits the BMP is a function of the overall drainage concept for the site. Curb cuts can be designed to both allow stormwater into the rain garden as well as to provide release of stormwater in excess of the WQCV. Roadside rain gardens located on a steep site might pool and overflow into downstream cells with a single curb cut, level spreader, or outlet structure located at the most downstream cell. When selecting the



**Photograph B-4.** The curb cut shown allows flows to enter this rain garden while excess flows bypass the facility.

type and location of the outlet structure, ensure runoff will not short-circuit the rain garden. This is a frequent problem when using a curb inlet located outside the rain garden for overflow.

For rain gardens with concentrated points of inflow, provide a forebay and energy dissipation. A depressed concrete slab works best for a forebay. It helps maintain a vertical drop at the inlet and allows for easily removal of sediment using a square shovel. Where rock is used for energy dissipation, provide separator fabric between the rock and growing medium to minimize subsidence.

8. **Vegetation:** UDFCD recommends that the filter area be vegetated with drought tolerant species that thrive in sandy soils. Table B-3 provides a suggested seed mix for sites that will not need to be irrigated after the grass has been established.

Mix seed well and broadcast, followed by hand raking to cover seed and then mulched. Hydromulching can be effective for large areas. Do not place seed when standing water or snow is present or if the ground is frozen. Weed control is critical in the first two to three years, especially when starting with seed.

When using sod, specify sand-grown sod. Do not use conventional sod. Conventional sod is grown in clay soil that will seal the filter area, greatly reducing overall function of the BMP.

When using an impermeable liner, select plants with diffuse (or fibrous) root systems, not taproots. Taproots can damage the liner and/or underdrain pipe. Avoid trees and large shrubs that may interfere with restorative maintenance. Plant these outside of the area of growing medium. Use a cutoff wall to ensure that roots do not grow into the underdrain or place trees and shrubs a conservative distance from the underdrain.

9. **Irrigation:** Provide spray irrigation at or above the WQCV elevation or place temporary irrigation on top of the rain garden surface. Do not place sprinkler heads on the flat surface. Remove temporary irrigation when vegetation is established. If left in place this will become buried over time and will be damaged during maintenance operations.

Adjust irrigation schedules during the growing season to provide the minimum water necessary to maintain plant health and to maintain the available pore space for infiltration.

## Designing for Flood Protection

Provide the WQCV in rain gardens that direct excess flow into to a landscaped basin designed for flood control or design a single basin to provide water quality and flood control. See the *Storage* chapter in Volume 2 of the USDCM for more information. UD-Detention, available at [www.udfcd.org](http://www.udfcd.org), will facilitate design either alternative.

Table B-3. Native seed mix for rain gardens

| Common Name                       | Scientific Name               | Variety   | PLS <sup>2</sup><br>lbs per<br>Acre | Ounces<br>per<br>Acre |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Sand bluestem                     | Andropogon hallii             | Garden    | 3.5                                 |                       |
| Sideoats grama                    | Bouteloua curtipendula        | Butte     | 3                                   |                       |
| Prairie sandreed                  | Calamovilfa longifolia        | Goshen    | 3                                   |                       |
| Indian ricegrass                  | Oryzopsis hymenoides          | Paloma    | 3                                   |                       |
| Switchgrass                       | Panicum virgatum              | Blackwell | 4                                   |                       |
| Western wheatgrass                | Pascopyrum smithii            | Ariba     | 3                                   |                       |
| Little bluestem                   | Schizachyrium scoparium       | Patura    | 3                                   |                       |
| Alkali sacaton                    | Sporobolus airoides           |           | 3                                   |                       |
| Sand dropseed                     | Sporobolus cryptandrus        |           | 3                                   |                       |
| Pasture sage <sup>1</sup>         | Artemisia frigida             |           |                                     | 2                     |
| Blue aster <sup>1</sup>           | Aster laevis                  |           |                                     | 4                     |
| Blanket flower <sup>1</sup>       | Gaillardia aristata           |           |                                     | 8                     |
| Prairie coneflower <sup>1</sup>   | Ratibida columnifera          |           |                                     | 4                     |
| Purple prairieclover <sup>1</sup> | Dalea (Petalostemum) purpurea |           |                                     | 4                     |
| Sub-Totals:                       |                               |           | 27.5                                | 22                    |
| <b>Total lbs per acre:</b>        |                               |           | <b>28.9</b>                         |                       |

<sup>1</sup> Wildflower seed (optional) for a more diverse and natural look.<sup>2</sup> PLS = Pure Live Seed.

## Aesthetic Design

In addition to effective stormwater quality treatment, rain gardens can be attractively incorporated into a site within one or several landscape areas. Aesthetically designed rain gardens will typically either reflect the character of their surroundings or become distinct features within their surroundings. Guidelines for each approach are provided below.

### Reflecting the Surrounding

- Determine design characteristics of the surrounding. This becomes the context for the drainage improvement. Use these characteristics in the structure.
- Create a shape or shapes that "fix" the forms surrounding the improvement. Make the improvement part of the existing surrounding.
- The use of material is essential in making any new improvement an integral part of the whole. Select materials that are as similar as possible to the surrounding architectural/engineering materials. Select materials from the same source if possible. Apply materials in the same quantity, manner, and method as original material.
- Size is an important feature in seamlessly blending the addition into its context. If possible, the overall size of the improvement should look very similar to the overall sizes of other similar objects in the improvement area.
- The use of the word texture in terms of the structure applies predominantly to the selection of plant material. The materials used should as closely as possible, blend with the size and texture of other plant material used in the surrounding. The plants may or may not be the same, but should create a similar feel, either individually or as a mass.

#### Reflective Design

A reflective design borrows the characteristics, shapes, colors, materials, sizes and textures of the built surroundings. The result is a design that fits seamlessly and unobtrusively in its environment.

### Creating a Distinct Feature

Designing the rain garden as a distinct feature is limited only by budget, functionality, and client preference. There is far more latitude in designing a rain garden that serves as a distinct feature. If this is the intent, the main consideration beyond functionality is that the improvement create an attractive addition to its surroundings. The use of form, materials, color, and so forth focuses on the improvement itself and does not necessarily reflect the surroundings, depending on the choice of the client or designer.



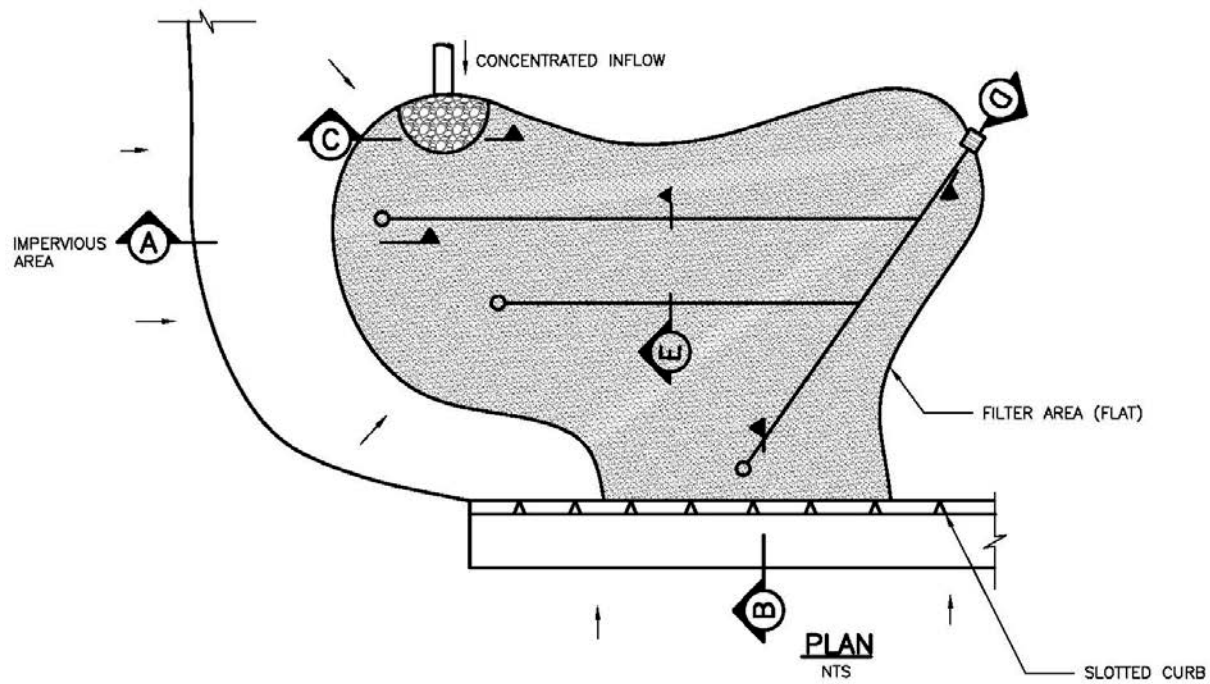
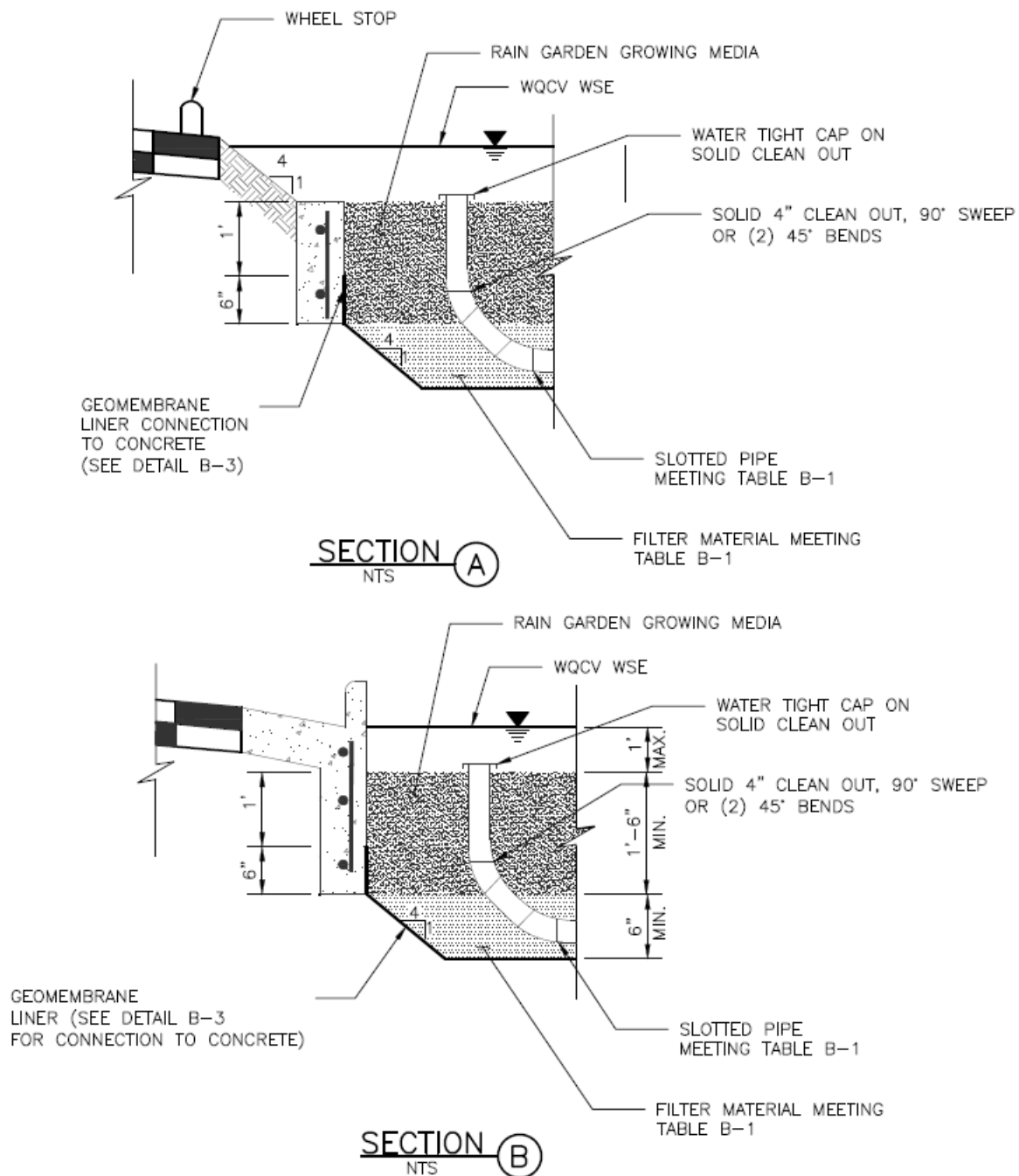
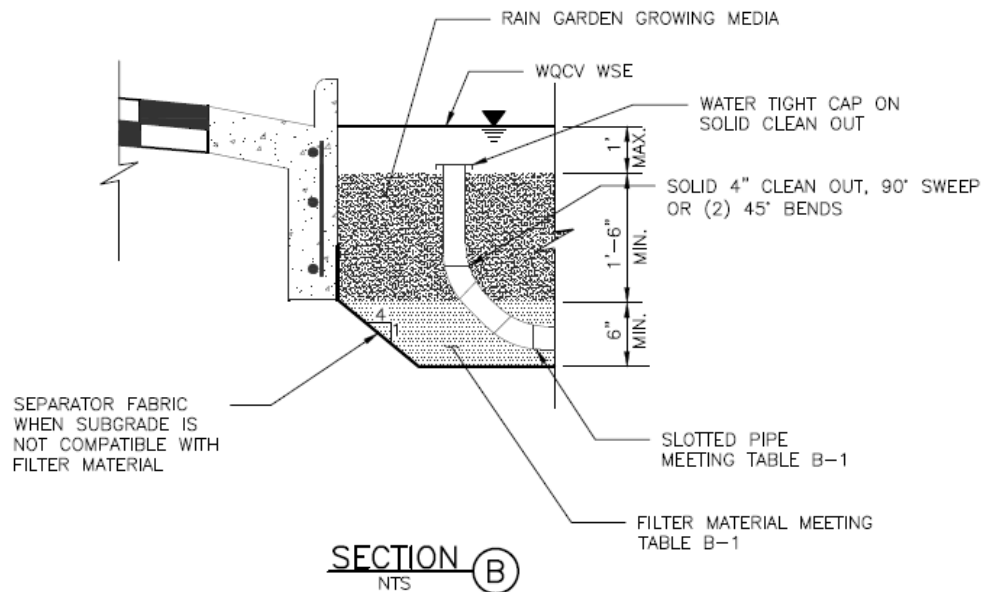
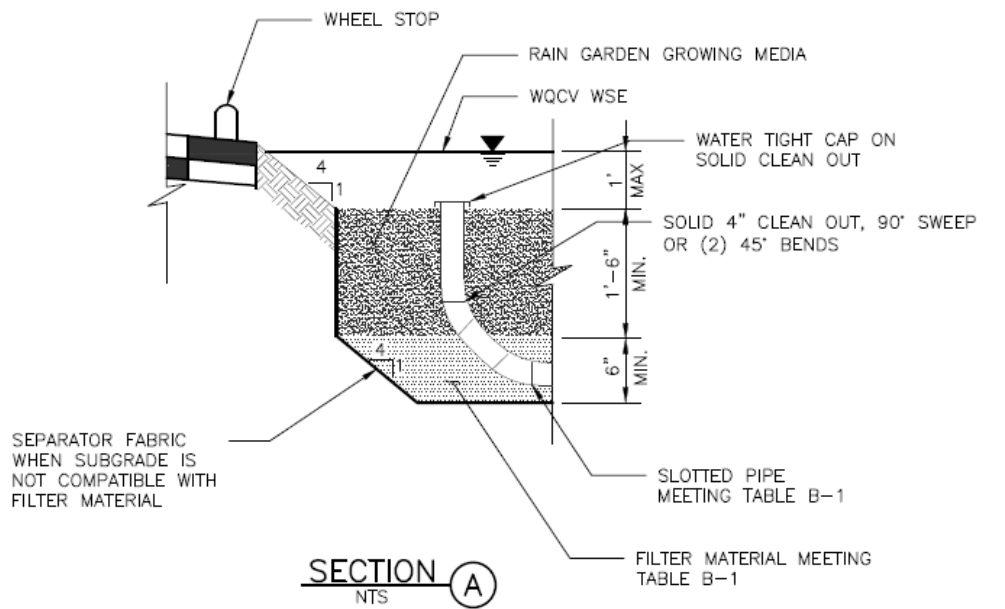


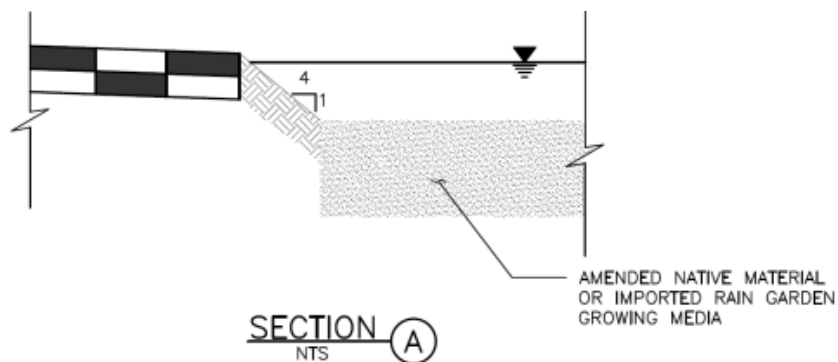
Figure B-1 – Typical rain garden plan and sections



## NO-INFILTRATION SECTIONS

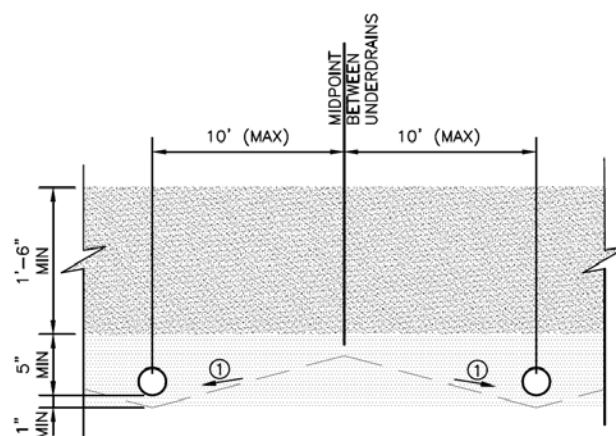
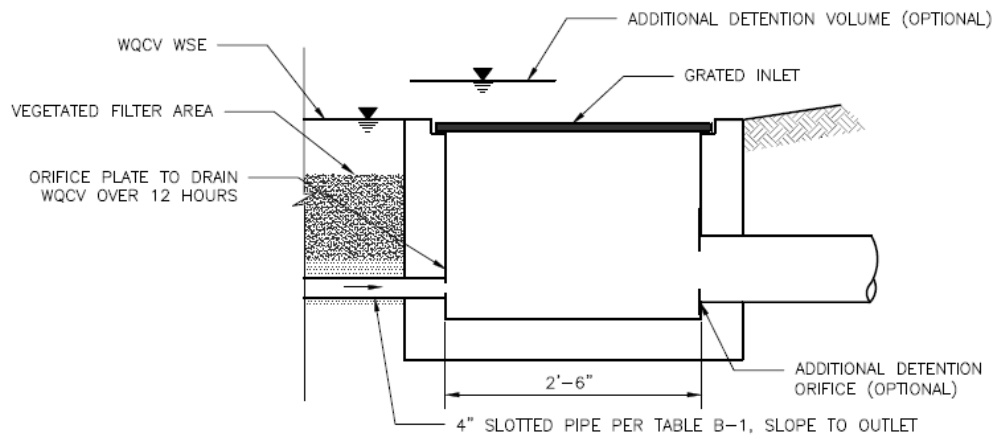
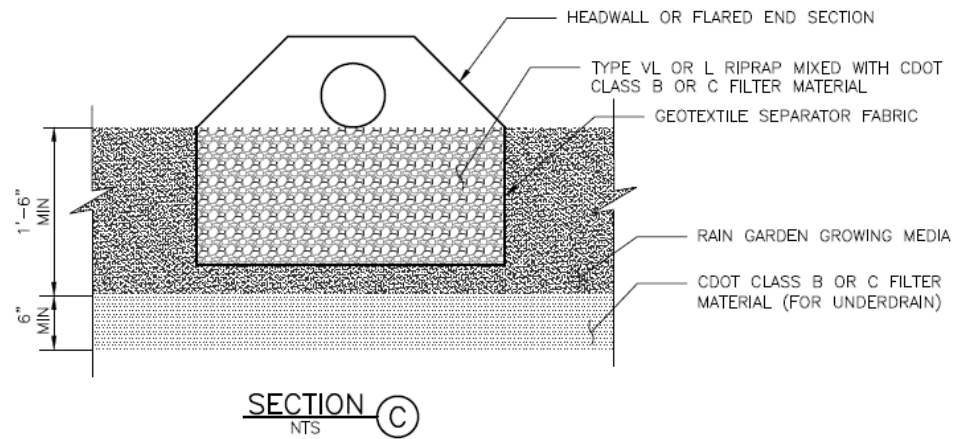


### PARTIAL INFILTRATION SECTIONS

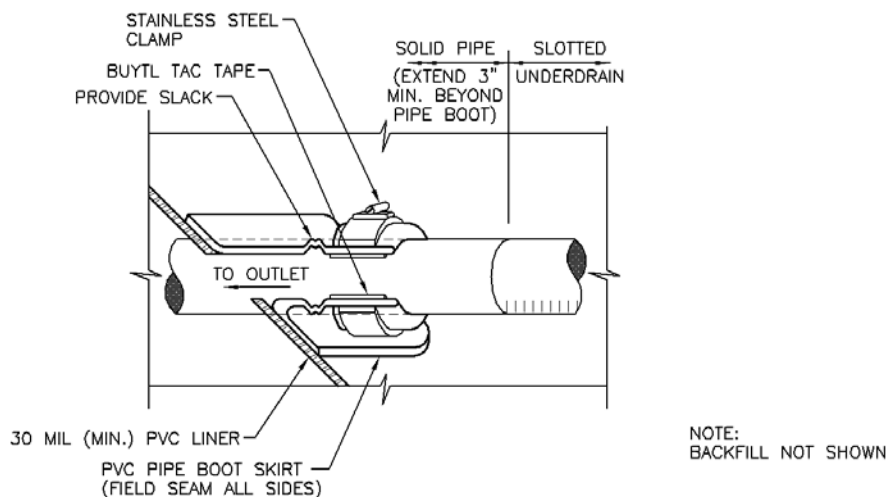


### FULL INFILTRATION SECTION

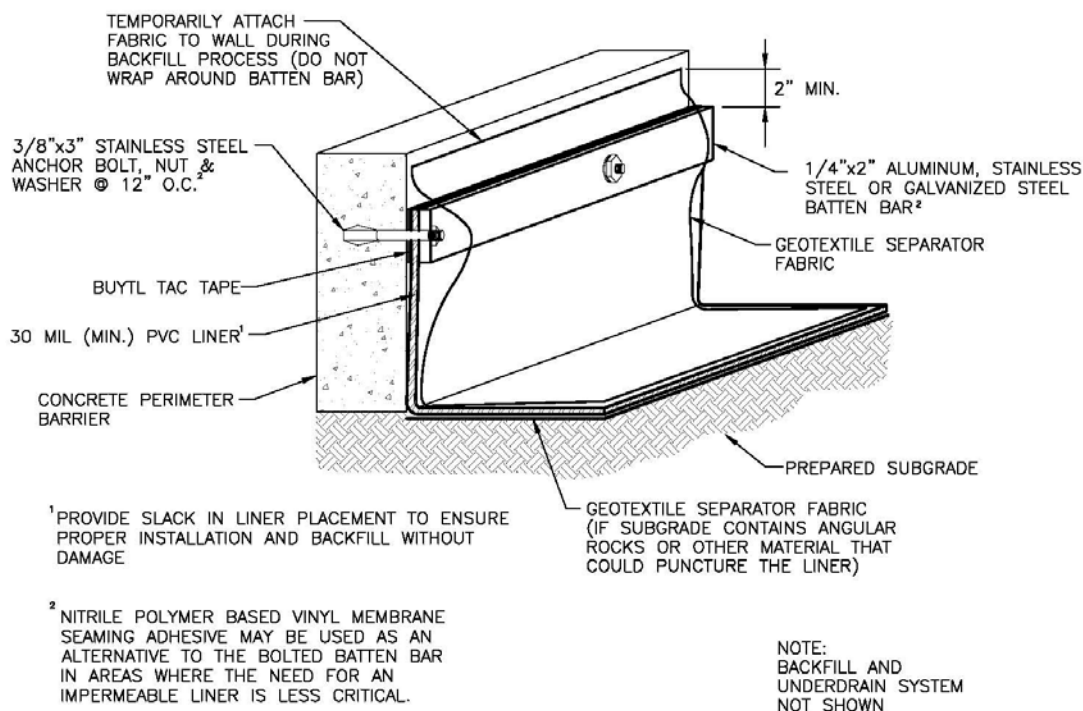




① SLOPE (STRAIGHT GRADE) SUBGRADE (2-10%) TO UNDERDRAIN TO REDUCE SATURATED SOIL CONDITIONS BETWEEN STORM EVENTS (OPTIONAL)



**Figure B-2. Geomembrane Liner/Underdrain Penetration Detail**



**Figure B-3. Geomembrane Liner/Concrete Connection Detail**

## Construction Considerations

Proper construction of rain gardens involves careful attention to material specifications, final grades, and construction details. For a successful project, implement the following practices:

- Protect area from excessive sediment loading during construction. This is the most common cause of clogging of rain gardens. The portion of the site draining to the rain garden must be stabilized before allowing flow into the rain garden. This includes completion of paving operations.
- Avoid over compaction of the area to preserve infiltration rates (for partial and full infiltration sections).
- Provide construction observation to ensure compliance with design specifications. Improper installation, particularly related to facility dimensions and elevations and underdrain elevations, is a common problem with rain gardens.
- When using an impermeable liner, ensure enough slack in the liner to allow for backfill, compaction, and settling without tearing the liner.
- Provide necessary quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) when constructing an impermeable geomembrane liner system, including but not limited to fabrication testing, destructive and non-destructive testing of field seams, observation of geomembrane material for tears or other defects, and air lace testing for leaks in all field seams and penetrations. QA/QC should be overseen by a professional engineer. Consider requiring field reports or other documentation from the engineer.
- Provide adequate construction staking to ensure that the site properly drains into the facility, particularly with respect to surface drainage away from adjacent buildings. Photo B-3 and Photo B-4 illustrate a construction error for an otherwise correctly designed series of rain gardens.



**Photograph B-3.** Inadequate construction staking may have contributed to flows bypassing this rain garden.



**Photograph B-4.** Runoff passed the upgradient rain garden, shown in Photo B-3, and flooded this downstream rain garden.

**References**

- Erickson, Andy. 2009. Field Applications of Enhanced Sand Filtration. University of Minnesota *Stormwater Management Practice Assessment Project Update*. <http://wrc.umn.edu>.
- Hunt, William F., Davis, Allen P., Traver, Robert. G. 2012. "Meeting Hydrologic and Water Quality Goals through Targeted Bioretention Design" *Journal of Environmental Engineering*. (2012) 138:698-707. Print.