Spring Newsletter

Spring officially began on March 20th. After a long winter most of us are looking forward to the snow melting and the grass and leaves turning green. With planting season around the corner, now is the time to think about applying for a grant from the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District to put in a raingarden, restore native habitat, or install a shoreline buffer. Read more about our Cost Share Grant Program and much more in our spring newsletter!

District Updates

Water Resource Center Open House
Join us on Wednesday, April 2, 2014, to see the architectural drawings for our new office/education facility, view landscape design plans, and get updates on the construction schedule. Stop in any time between 6:00-7:30 PM. The open house will be held in the Heritage Room at Eden Prairie City Hall (8080 Mitchell Rd, Eden Prairie, 55344). No RSVP required. Light snacks will be provided.

$100,000 in Grant Funds Available

The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District is offering financial assistance for projects that protect and improve water and natural resources within the Nine Mile Creek Watershed. Raingardens, shoreline restoration, permeable pavers, and native habitat restoration are all eligible for funding, along with many other project types.

Cost share grants are awarded for up to 75% of a project’s cost with maximum grant awards of $3,000 for residential projects, $10,000 for lake and town home association projects and $25,000 for commercial, nonprofit and government projects. The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District will accept applications through April 4, 2014. To download an application, visit the District’s website.

Linking Land Use to Clean Water

Most people know that Nemo is the name of an adorable fish from a popular Disney movie. Fewer people know that NEMO also stands for Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials. NEMO provides educational and skill building programming to elected and appointed officials and community leaders that increases their knowledge about the connection of land use and management decisions to water quality and natural resources.

Save the dates! City council members, planning commissioners, park board members, watershed advisory board members, and other community leaders are invited to participate in a series of workshops this summer:

- Linking Land Use to Clean Water: May 8 or May 14
- Workshop on the Water (Lake Minnetonka): July 23
- Lessons Across the Landscape: September 25

More information and registration is available at: http://z.umn.edu/NEMO101.
District Events

Raingardens and Beyond Workshops
Tuesday, March 25, 2014
6-9 PM, Bloomington Public Works (1700 W 98th St, Bloomington)
or
Thursday, March 27, 2014
6-9 PM, Edina Public Works (7450 Metro Blvd, Edina)

In this three-hour Metro Blooms workshop, participants will learn about watershed management, stormwater runoff, and raingarden basics including design, installation and maintenance of raingardens using native plants. In the second half of the session participants will receive hands-on assistance in planning a raingarden.

Register at http://myraingarden.org or call 651-699-2426. Cost is $15.

Sponsored by Nine Mile Creek and Minnehaha Creek Watershed Districts and the Cities of Bloomington and Edina.

Water Resource Center Open House
Wednesday, April 2, 2014
6:00-7:30 PM, Eden Prairie City Hall (8080 Mitchell Rd, Eden Prairie) in the Heritage Rooms

Join the District any time between 6-7:30 PM to see the architectural drawings for our new office/education facility, view landscape design plans, and get updates on the construction schedule. No RSVP required. Light snacks will be provided.

The Benefits of Being Shallow: A Shallow Lakes Forum
Saturday, April 12, 2014
8:30-11:30 AM, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum (3675 Arboretum Dr, Chanhassen)
Shallow lakes – lakes that average 15 feet or less in depth – provide a variety of benefits, including fishing and hunting, recreation, and habitat for wildlife. Managing a shallow lake has its own set of unique challenges, which this forum will highlight.

**Purpose:** Provide a forum to enhance knowledge and understanding among local citizens on shallow lake ecology, monitoring, and management, as well as how to effectively engage citizens in enhancement and protection of this unique resource.

**Who should attend:** People who live on, live near, work with, care for, and enjoy our shallow lakes.

**Topics:**

- **Shallow Lakes Basics** - Understanding our shallow lakes
- **Rules and Regulations** - What can or can't I do?
- **Shallow Lake Monitoring** - Understanding the who, what, and why of monitoring shallow lakes
- **Shallow Lake Management Strategies** - Got plants? Need fish? Successful and innovative management tools
- **Lake Association Basics** - How to start and keep a lake association going
- **Lake Association Panel Discussion** - What makes a lake association an effective partner?

**Sponsors:** Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District, Nine Mile Creek Watershed District, Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization, City of Minnetonka, City of Eden Prairie

**Registration:** [www.minnehahacreek.org/shallow-lakes](http://www.minnehahacreek.org/shallow-lakes) ($10 online, $15 at the door)
Landscaping with Native Plants Seminar
Wednesday, March 26, 2014
7-8 PM, Minnetonka Community Center (14600 Minnetonka Blvd, Minnetonka) in the Community Room

Do you have areas in your yard where grass doesn't grow? Do you want to reduce time spent on lawn maintenance? A native garden may be the solution. Plant a variety of native plant species or just a few. Then enjoy your beautiful, low-maintenance garden, knowing that you're saving water, reducing air pollution and providing habitat for birds and butterflies. Come and learn more about natives during this one hour seminar with Landscape Architect and Ecologist, Fred Rozumalski.

Invasive Species A to Z
Thursday, May 8, 2014
6-9 PM, Minnetonka Community Center (14600 Minnetonka Blvd, Minnetonka)

Guest speakers Steve McComas and Cheryl Culbreth will discuss common invasive plant and animal species found in and around area lakes and ponds, as well as highlight new and emerging threats. The workshop will cover invasive species such as zebra mussels, carp, curly leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, buckthorn and purple loosestrife. Learn how to identify these invaders, find out if preventative measures work and what control options are available to manage invasive species.

Native Plant Market and Eco Fun Fest
Wednesday, June 4, 2014
3-7 PM, Minnetonka City Hall

Make sure to visit the District's booth at the City of Minnetonka's Native Plant Market. The event features a native plant market, plant walks and fun kid activities. Visit the City of Minnetonka's website for more information.

Natural Resources

Exploring the District: Edina's Centennial Lakes Park
Photo and text provided by the City of Edina
Nestled alongside the busy France Avenue corridor in the southeast corner of Edina is one of the true gems of the Edina Park and Recreation system. Centennial Lakes Park, opened in 1991, has many unique amenities that attract visitors from throughout the metropolitan area. Throughout the year, visitors can enjoy the 1.5 miles of paved pathways or relax on one of the many swinging benches overlooking the lake or gardens.

During the summer, Centennial Lakes becomes a hub of activity for all ages. The park is home to the Centennial Lakes Putting Course—18 holes of authentic bent grass greens surrounded by water, sand traps, boulders and gardens. The course has proven to be a favorite of both golfers and non-golfers alike, as they navigate the greens using only a putter. Adjacent to the putting course are some of the finest croquet and lawn bowling courts in the Midwest. The courts draw players of all abilities throughout the summer. In addition, park visitors can ply the
to almost 100 performances each summer in the areas of music, theater, dance and the performing arts. On peaceful summer evenings, local favorites may draw up to 2,000 people to this lakeside venue.

In the winter months, the frozen waters of Centennial Lakes transform into outdoor ice skating rinks. For an enchanting nighttime experience, there are lights covering most of the three ponds, plus a warming house featuring fireplaces, concessions and skate rental.


Spring Phenology
Photo and text by Christine Petersen

What is the one topic that always comes up in conversation among Minnesotans? The weather. We have good reason for this fascination. Our winters are long and cold; summers can be hot and sticky. This winter was more of a conversation-starter than most, bringing about 50 subzero days and more than 60 inches of snow.

Around the New Year—barely into the season—I read a question posted on Facebook by the DJ of a local radio station. How many people, he inquired, would be happy to be rid of the snow? Some people said they enjoyed snow for its recreational opportunities. But by and large, people responded in favor of snow-free winters. I was stunned. Really, what would we do without snow?
During winter in the Northern Hemisphere, almost one-sixth of the Earth is covered in snow and ice. These areas reflect up to 95 percent of incoming sunlight. Open water, soil, leafy trees, and clear roads are lovely. But they absorb heat. Winter cools and regulates the entire planet’s temperature.

In autumn, lakes “turn over.” Chilly temperatures cool the surface waters. Colder water is heavy, so it sinks. Warmer water from the lake bottom is forced upward and eventually freezes. Cool water trapped below the ice holds a high concentration of oxygen, which can be used by organisms remaining active through the season. And when the ice melts, this cool water slows the rate of evaporation even as ambient air temperatures increase.

Snow-covered ground is a few degrees warmer than exposed areas, reducing the risk that roots, bulbs, and animals in the soil will freeze. As winter ends, gradually melting snow seeps into the ground. As it trickles downward, the moisture sparks life back into dormant plants and recharges aquifers in the rocks below. Melt water also flows over surfaces, raising lake levels and bringing new energy to rivers and streams.

Over the past couple of weeks, bitter cold days have given way to tentatively promising ones. Walking through the neighborhood, I hear the telltale sounds of change—a steady drip, slap, and gurgle as water streams from rooftops and darkens the trunks of trees. Rivulets slip beneath thin sheets of ice along the edges of the street, and I must pass around or through pools that have gathered in every dip and crack. The year’s first Canada geese wing overhead and circle the lake. Skittering on the ice, they recover their dignity and sit expectantly. They know, as I do, that spring is on the way.

Creek Stories
Photo and text by Linnea Palmstrom
Last August, I was on a regular excursion to Nine Mile Creek visiting the dock leading up to the creek at Edina High School. The osprey chicks from the Creek Valley Elementary School nest had just learned to fly, and one chick was exploring around the creek. I was watching the chick on a branch of a tree when it suddenly started to make loud food begging calls. The father osprey was flying by with a fish in his talons. The father then decided it would be a good idea to perch on a nearby branch and start eating the fish right in front of the young osprey. The young osprey started to make louder and louder calls, but the father kept ignoring it as he continued feeding. After he finished, he took the remaining half of the fish to the nest where he shared it with the chick. I can't help but feel that the father purposely ate in front of the chick to encourage the chick to learn to hunt for itself and become independent. Eventually I did see the chicks hunting their own fish, so the parents were successful in raising their young. Hopefully, after a couple of years in Central or South America, the chicks will come back and start their own families along Nine Mile Creek.

Do you have a creek story that you would like to share? Email it to the District, and it might be featured in our newsletter!

Clean Water Tip
From the street, to the stream

As the snow melts and Minnesotans emerge from hibernation, a winter's worth of accumulated trash and debris appear along the streets. If not cleaned up, snowmelt and spring rainstorms will wash the dirt, trash and leftover fall leaves into stormdrains that lead to a nearby lake or creek. It might be easy to ignore the dirty streets with the thought that the city will soon be by with street sweepers to tidy things up. Unfortunately, the street sweepers can't always get to all streets before spring rains have washed a significant amount of pollution down the drain.

You can help keep our water clean! As you're stretching your legs this spring, take a small trash bag with you on your walk. Pick up any garbage you see along the way. Want to help in a bigger way? You can organize a Community Clean-Up for Water Quality (CCWQ). CCWQ are local projects that prevent water pollution. Volunteers,
Rake, sweep, bag and remove loose dirt and leaves blocking storm drains on city streets. More information about the cleanups is available on the Freshwater Society’s website.

Email the District a picture of you cleaning up your curb or picking up trash, and you could win a free copy of the Blue Thumb Guide to Raingardens. Winners will be notified by May 15th.
Summer Newsletter

The temperatures have warmed up and summer is nearly here, which means it is time to get outside and enjoy all that Minnesota has to offer. There are lots of exciting things happening in the District, including fun outdoor events, so read on and find out what is going on!

District Updates

Water Resource Center
removed to make room for an addition that will include a lobby/reception area, large meeting room, restrooms and a kitchen. The remaining portion of the house will be renovated into offices and small meeting spaces. Work will continue through the summer and fall, with an anticipated move-in date of early November. In addition to office construction, work on the landscape will begin, which will incorporate a number of stormwater best management practices, including raingardens, native plant restoration, permeable pavers, and a cistern, among others. To keep up to date on construction progress throughout the summer, visit our photo sharing site.

Summer Education Series

NMCWD is once again hosting a Summer Education Series. The series is designed to get people outside exploring and learning about the natural resources of the District. Join us at these free, family-friendly events, and get outside!

Event registration is required. For more information, visit us at: http://ninemilecreek.org/SES.asp.

Photo Contest
Photo Contest Deadline: September 19

Calling all photographers! The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District is seeking pictures of Nine Mile Creek or anything within the District, including lakes, parks, plants and outdoor recreation. Photos must be in horizontal format and not digitally altered beyond standard optimization. Winners of the contest will have their photo(s) published in the 2015 Nine Mile Creek Photo Calendar. The calendars will be distributed free of charge throughout the District in late December. Complete rules are available by viewing the official contest announcement.

District Events

Canoeing at Bryant Lake

Tuesday, June 17, 2014

6:00-8:00 PM, Bryant Lake Park (6800 Rowland Rd, Eden Prairie, 55344)

Whether you have never canoed before or just love getting out on the water, this family-friendly event offered in collaboration with Giggle. Play. Connect will be lots of fun. Canoes, paddles, life jackets, and instruction will be provided. In addition to canoeing, there will be fun activities on the beach for kids to enjoy. RSVP at
Family Fishing at Bush Lake
Wednesday, July 9, 2014
6:00-8:30 PM, West Bush Lake Park, Picnic Shelter #2 (9401 West Bush Lake Rd, Bloomington, 55438)

Fishing connects us with our local environment and encourages stewardship of natural resources. This fishing program, led by MinnAqua, will include educational activities for the family, casting practice and time to fish. All fishing equipment and bait will be provided. Fishing licenses are not needed. RSVP at esniegowski@ninemilecreek.org or 952-358-2276.

Family Fishing at Shady Oak Lake
Saturday, August 2, 2014
9:00-11:00 AM, Shady Oak Beach (5200 Shady Oak Rd, Minnetonka, 55343)

This event, led by MinnAqua, will include educational activities for the family, casting practice and time to fish. All fishing equipment and bait will be provided. Fishing licenses are not needed. In addition to fishing, this collaborative event with Giggle.Play.Connect, will offer several other inclusive play activities. RSVP at esniegowski@ninemilecreek.org or 952-358-2276.

Native Seed Collection
Thursday, August 21, 2014
6:00-7:30 PM, Lone Lake Park (5624 Shady Oak Rd, Minnetonka, 55343)

Join the City of Minnetonka Restoration Specialist to:
• Walk in the woods to find seeds of native wildflowers
• Collect seeds for sowing in the park and to take home
• Visit the raingardens where plants yield food for wildlife
• Learn about seeds of the bad plants
Minnetonka Public Works at 952-988-8400 or register at www.eminnetonka.com after Aug 1st.

Natural Resources

Exploring the District: Shady Oak Beach

Shady Oak Lake and Beach is a recreational area that offers a sandy beach, as well as play areas, lifeguards, swimming, a high dive, concessions, changing area, canoe rental, sand volleyball, and free parking. The lake also has a fishing pier and has picnic shelters that can be reserved. For more information, visit the City of Minnetonka's website.

Summer Phenology

Photo and text by Christine Petersen
It's not for naught that the *Monarda* plant is also called beebalm. On warm, mid-summer days, the gaudy flowers attract scores of bumblebees. Tottering and swaying like drunken sailors, the bees move languidly between stems to test each blossom for nectar. Becalmed by that sweet, liquid sustenance, they pay no mind even as I lean close to take pictures. It must be a good vintage.

Each beebalm stem produces a flower head (or, less commonly, a double head) bearing whorls of about 30 tube-shaped flowers. I've often thought that this inflorescence looks like a little person wearing a tall, colorful crown. Its appearance may be silly, but the beebalm's fragrance is intoxicating—slightly spicy and enduring, even when dried. Native Americans and settlers appreciated the medicinal value of this prairie plant. They steeped the leaves to make tea, which was used to treat digestive, respiratory, and nervous disorders. A compress of beebalm leaves was also recommended to disinfect wounds.

*Monarda* flowers bloom for weeks, bringing color to the garden and sustaining a wide variety of native pollinators. In addition to various bees, ruby-throated hummingbirds join the drinking party in the beebalm patch. When shade hits the plants later in the day, hummingbird- and bee-mimicking clearwing moths arrive to take their fill. Over time, all this activity takes its toll. The tufted flowers begin to begin to look scraggly and sad. Each inflorescence gradually goes bald, the individual flowers falling away until only a few withered and fading blossoms remain around the perimeter. I don’t hesitate to prolong the pleasure of beebalm in my garden by plucking off some of the waning inflorescences—conditions permitting, “deadheading” encourages a second flowering in early autumn. But I don’t spend too much time mourning. When flowers fall away, it’s a clear indication that the hard-working dumbledores (that’s Old English for bumblebee) and other pollinators did their work well. The plants can now direct energy toward
Creek Stories
Text by Ann Hill

In mid-May, I helped the watershed district provide a hands-on experience for fourth graders about the water quality of Nine Mile Creek, which flows behind Creek Valley Elementary School in Edina. To prepare for the fourth graders, we filled four buckets with water from the creek and added aquatic macroinvertebrates that we had collected with a net. Aquatic macroinvertebrates are organisms without a backbone that live in the water and are large enough to see with the naked eye.

The fourth graders got to spend time at each bucket looking at the bugs and consulting an identification chart to determine how tolerant of pollutants each macroinvertebrate
showed enthusiasm for the snails and various insects by the end. By far the most popular critter from the creek was the crayfish. The students enjoyed daringly placing their fingers in front of the pincers, and then pulling their hand away before the crayfish could grab on.

I also helped the fourth graders test the water for dissolved oxygen. Everyone was excited to complete one step of the test and eagerly waited for the sample to change color, indicating the amount of dissolved oxygen present. The students also looked down a transparency tube (a tube which one fills with water to the point where the bottom is no longer visible) to discover how dirty the sediment in the creek made the water. The kids were happy to see that the results of all the tests indicated that their creek was healthy. I enjoyed the opportunity to be outside and to spend time with students who care about the water quality in their community.

*Ann is a senior in high school and spent the month of May interning with the NMCWD.*

Do you have a creek story that you would like to share? Email it to the District, and it might be featured in our newsletter!

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**Clean Water Tip**

**Stopping Water Where it Drops**

Text by Ann Hill, photo courtesy of [www.cleanwatermn.org](http://www.cleanwatermn.org)
From the street, to the stream

Everyone loves a summer storm, but have you ever thought about what happens to the water after it hits your roof? After flowing down the gutters and onto the ground, the water follows the sloping of the land to the lowest point, which is usually a storm drain in the street. As it passes over your yard, fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides get swept away with the water, as well as oil from driveways and streets, and sediment. Once the water reaches the storm drain, everything flows to a nearby river or lake, without passing through any filtration system.

However, there is a simple way you can help! Rain barrels can be placed under a downspout to catch the water coming off the roof before it hits the ground. Aside from helping keep your local water resources clean, the water stored in the barrel can be saved and used to water your lawn or garden when you need it. During the summer it is estimated that watering lawns and gardens comprises almost 40% of a household’s water consumption. By installing a rain barrel, you can save money and help conserve water. Rain barrels can be purchased from local hardware or garden supply stores, or you can purchase materials to make your own. If you don’t like the way it looks, outdoor primer and paint allow you to make your rain barrel unique and exciting. For more information about rain barrels, visit: http://www.fmr.org/landscapefortheriver/rain-barrels.
A quarterly newsletter produced by the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District.

View this email in your browser

Fall Newsletter

As summer changes over to fall, the Nine Mile Watershed District is looking forward to some changes, as well. We have been busy the last few weeks looking at paint and tile samples, cupboard doors and more, all in final preparation for the District's new office and interpretive facility to be complete. We anticipate moving to the new office by the end of October. The District will send out updated contact information once we have moved and are "open for business" at our new location. We are very excited for the opportunities the building will offer and can't wait to share the new facility with you. Until then, check out the concept drawings by the talented architects at LHB and a picture of the almost complete exterior.

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Want to see more pictures of the office? Visit our photo sharing site for updated pictures of the construction process.

District Updates

Photo Contest Submission Deadline Approaching
Photo Contest Deadline: September 19

Last call for photo submissions! The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District is seeking pictures of Nine Mile Creek or anything within the District, including lakes, parks, plants and outdoor recreation. Winners of the contest will have their photo(s) published in the 2015 Nine Mile Creek Photo Calendar. The calendars are distributed free of charge throughout the District in late December. Complete rules are available by viewing the official contest announcement.

Upcoming Events

2014 Clean Water Summit
Green Infrastructure for Clean Water: Costs and Benefits to our Communities
Thursday, September 11, 2014
8 AM-5 PM, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in the Macmillan Auditorium

In Minnesota, water is an important yet vulnerable resource we need to protect. Using green infrastructure to manage runoff in the urban landscape plays an important role in cleaning our water and provides multiple benefits to our communities. This event will focus on the costs and benefits of green infrastructure, including the economic, social and ecological factors. Cost-benefit tools and design strategies will be explored, guiding participants towards more local partnerships, more implementation, and cleaner water in our communities.
NEMO Workshop: Lessons Across the Landscape
Thursday, September 25, 2014
4-7:30 PM, Tour will originate from the Eden Prairie Water Treatment Plant

Elected and appointed officials and community leaders are invited to this workshop focusing on streambank protection and restoration and stormwater management practices in communities. This program will include a tour of multiple sites in the west metro region that will be applicable to all local communities. For more information and registration, visit: [http://z.umn.edu/BusTour](http://z.umn.edu/BusTour).

Winter Maintenance of Roads
Tuesday, October 21, 2014
9 AM-2 PM, Minnetonka Community Center in the Community Room (14600 Minnetonka Blvd, Minnetonka, 55345)

This training offers information about best practices for managing snow and ice on roadways. The workshop is for city, county and state winter maintenance professionals- both plow drivers and their supervisors. Training topics include: application rates, equipment calibration, new maintenance methods, anti-icing, and more. Register at: [http://winterroads.eventbrite.com](http://winterroads.eventbrite.com).

Winter Maintenance of Parking Lot and Sidewalks
Thursday, October 23, 2014 or Thursday, December 11, 2014
9 AM-2 PM, Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District Office (14500 Martin Dr, Ste 1500, Eden Prairie, 55344)

This training offers information about best practices for managing snow and ice on parking lots and sidewalks. These practices will help you save money, time and the environment. Training topics include: material selection, application rates, anti-icing,
Register for the **October** workshop at: [http://winterworkshop-oct.eventbrite.com](http://winterworkshop-oct.eventbrite.com).

Register for the **December** workshop at: [http://winterworkshop-dec.eventbrite.com](http://winterworkshop-dec.eventbrite.com).

**Community Events**

**Come visit the NMCWD’s table at the upcoming community events:**

- Bloomington’s [Heritage Days](#), September 20 from 12-5 PM in the Green Corner
- Richardson Nature Center’s [Party in the Prairie](#), September 27 from 4-7 PM
- Minnetonka’s [City Open House](#), October 7 from 5-7:30 PM in the Community Room at the Minnetonka Community Center

**Natural Resources**

**Exploring the District: Richardson Nature Center**
Richardson Nature Center (8737 East Bush Lake Rd, Bloomington, 55438) is located within Hyland Lake Park Reserve. The nature center has bird watching backpacks, bug and frog kits, Nordic walking sticks, and more that can be checked out to assist you in your exploration of the park. Inside the center there are live raptors, reptiles and amphibians, in addition to playful mosaics and sculptures that you can interact with.

Outside, there are hiking trails that lead through prairie, oak forest and wetland habitats, where a variety of wildlife make their homes. For the kids (or the young at heart), there is a Nature Exploration Area that encourages children to climb, jump, build, dig and play imaginatively in the outdoors.

Come to the Party in the Prairie at Richardson on September 27! More information and registration can be found at: [http://www.threeriversparks.org/events/P/party-in-the-prairie.aspx](http://www.threeriversparks.org/events/P/party-in-the-prairie.aspx).

Where is your favorite place in the District to explore? Send us an email and tell us where and why!

**Fall Phenology**

Photo and text by Christine Petersen
On an early autumn day, a dull thunk! brings my family to attention. We all recognize the sound and react immediately. Two of us rise in unison from the table and head to the front door. Running in from the living room to join us, my son speaks the sad words: “A bird hit the window!”
blinking slowly in the bright afternoon sunlight. We know what to do next. The boy grabs a cardboard shoebox and places a clean rag on the bottom. After watching for a few minutes to make sure my intervention will be useful, I step outside and move slowly across the deck. Cupping the tiny bird in my hands, I can feel its warmth against my palms and the minute expansions of its chest with every breath. The bird is transferred gently into the box, where it can rest in the quiet and dark. Half an hour later, we hear the rustle of its wings against the cardboard. I lift the lid. The little bird’s head swivels as gazes around. Then it bursts into flight and is gone.

Many times, the outcome is not so hopeful. Birds often die immediately upon impact or—even if they manage to fly away—are too injured to recover. Injured birds hide away in foliage and are caught by predators (like cats and crows). Or they die and scavengers consume the remains. For these and other reasons, accurate data on window strikes are frustratingly difficult to obtain. The National Audubon Society makes a rough estimate that window strikes may result in the deaths of one billion birds per year worldwide. Whatever the exact numbers, this is one of the prevalent causes of bird mortality—especially during the vulnerable periods of migration.

Migration takes songbirds through unfamiliar territory rife with threats they can’t anticipate. Chief among these are buildings. Birds are confounded by glass, which seems to offer open passage and deceptively reflects the surrounding foliage. Seeing no barrier, birds fly on at full speed. The bright lights that characterize our cities also threaten birds. Many species migrate at night and navigate by the stars. Ambient light throws off their internal navigation systems and may interfere with their vision, leading to strikes.

So far, I’ve found the simplest deterrent to be most effective: I hang streamers of brightly colored ribbon in front of the riskiest windows. Ribbons dance and sway in the wind, and the movement deters birds from approaching. Experts also suggest moving bird feeders, either keeping them within a few feet of windows—close enough that birds aren’t going full speed if they hit—or some distance away to deter strikes entirely. In its Lights Out program, Audubon Minnesota advocates turning off unnecessary interior and exterior lighting in homes and large buildings during the peak of spring and fall migration, mid-March to late May and August 15 to October 31. These small actions can make a big difference for the birds that share our habitat.

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**Clean Water Tip**

**Planting for Clean Water**

Text by Ann Hill
While turfgrass and annual plants are popular landscaping choices, native plants can provide both a better environmental and economic option. Native plants are well adapted to the local climate. They can survive harsh winters, and most native plants have long roots that reach deep into the ground to find water. This greatly eliminates the need for watering, consequently saving both money and resources.

The extensive root systems of many native plants help filter and trap pollutants from stormwater runoff, in addition to reducing erosion. Landscaping with native plants also reduces the need for mowing and the use of fertilizer. The omission of mowing cuts down on greenhouse gasses produced by lawn mowers, and native plants also help reduce greenhouse gasses by taking in CO$_2$.

Although the initial cost of purchasing native plants may be greater, their comparatively low maintenance will help you save money over time. NMCWD also has grants available for those interested in putting native plants in their yard. More information about the grants can be found on the District's website. Most local garden stores have a variety of native plants and flowers to choose from, allowing for the creation of a unique and visually pleasing landscape. Aside from your yard, native plants can also be planted along the shores of creeks and lakes where they help prevent erosion and provide habitat for butterflies, bees and other wildlife. No matter where you live, or what size yard you have, native plants can give you an aesthetically pleasing and environmentally friendly landscape.

The Blue Thumb website is a great place to learn more about native plants and how to plant for clean water. The NMCWD is a Blue Thumb partner.