



Frequently Asked Questions
 MSD Rainscaping Small Grants Program &
 Deer Creek Watershed Alliance Rainscaping Cost-Share Program



This document reviews questions the Rainscaping Team frequently receives regarding the **MSD Rainscaping Small Grants Program** and/or the **Deer Creek Watershed Alliance Rainscaping (DCWA) Cost-Share Program**. If you have a question that you do not see answered here or on the respective program pages, please reach out to the Rainscaping Team at rainscaping@mobot.org, or call 314-577-0202.

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Do all applicants have to attend an orientation?

Yes, all applicants must complete training to indicate that they understand the Program parameters and maintenance obligation they are signing up for when installing functional landscaping. Both programs require that applicants have attended a training within the last two years.

The Rainscaping Team holds at least 4 live orientation sessions annually for the **MSD Small Grants Program**. Applicants can register for these live sessions on the Small Grants webpage. Applicants may also fulfill this requirement by watching the orientation recording available on the Small Grants webpage. They will verify completion of the online orientation video by filling out the survey linked by the video. Note, applicants should use the same email address for the survey that they will include on their application.

The Rainscaping Team holds 2 live orientation sessions in February/March prior to the application deadline for each year's funding round. Registration for the **DCWA Rainscaping Cost-Share Program** orientation can be found on the program webpage. If applicants are unable to attend a live session, they may watch an online recording made available after the live sessions have passed. Applicants will verify completion of the online orientation video by filling out the survey linked by the video. Note, applicants should use the same email address for the survey that they will include on their application.

What is the policy on Dig Rite verification?

We do not require paperwork to verify that landowners have called Dig Rite prior to installation. However, Missouri law requires that utilities be located before digging begins. When applicants sign and submit an application to either rainscaping program, they agree to complete this work.

We always require utilities be included on the landscape drawing (or indicate a lack of utilities). Applications that do not include this information will be flagged for clarification before approval. Generally speaking, you wouldn't want to get too far on a project that proposes excavation without locating utilities first, but the requirement is the same whether excavation is proposed or not.

What if a site cannot pass a percolation test?

For instructions on how to conduct a percolation test, visit mobot.org/perc. Failing a percolation test means that particular location is not appropriate for any feature that will direct water into an excavated basin, such as a rain garden or permeable paver patio, *without accounting for the lack of permeability through additional measures such as an underdrain*.

The St. Louis region primarily consists of clay soils, so this is a fairly common obstacle to rain gardens but should not be an obstacle to rainscaping. For sites that fail percolation tests, we recommend installing a lawn alternative. Native plants in these features will improve soil permeability over time via aeration and deposition of organic matter.

Do landscape designs need to show degree of slope?

Landscape designs must show slope direction – degree is optional. Keep in mind, the more information provided, the better. If the slope is steep or very gradual, that information will help the design review team better understand the site. If the proposed area is flat, you must indicate that on the design.

How does rain garden placement impact an application's score?

When we score **MSD Small Grants** applications, projects that include a front yard feature get a few additional points compared to those with features entirely in the backyard due to visibility and outreach potential. *However, an appropriate feature in the backyard will score higher than an inappropriate feature in the front yard.*

At this time, the DCWA Cost-Share Program does not award bonus points to applications with features located in the front yard.

Why can't rain gardens be installed within the dripline of large trees?

Trees are *excellent* at intercepting and absorbing stormwater, the primary goal of both Programs. Excavating a rain garden basin in a root zone may damage roots and weaken or kill the tree. Even if roots are protected during excavation, some trees do not tolerate consistently wet soils. Placing a rain garden basin in their root zone may harm them over time.

Can projects replacing turf on sites without active stormwater issues receive funding?

Appropriate lawn alternatives are eligible for reimbursement through both the **DCWA Cost-Share** and **MSD Small Grants** Programs, even if they are not addressing a specific stormwater problem. Replacing turf grass with deep-rooted native plants improves the soil's capacity to absorb stormwater, even if there is not an issue before installation. These projects will typically score lower than projects that manage more stormwater.

The Programs exist for stormwater management and water quality improvement but there are additional benefits including increased biodiversity, wildlife habitat creation, and educational outreach. To explore benefits, check out the Benefits and Goals section of the Missouri Botanical Garden's online [Rainscaping Guide](#).

Can rainscaping projects include hellstrips/tree lawns?

Yes, rainscaping projects can include hellstrips/tree lawns. Please note, however, that work done in these areas does not count toward the minimum square footage for the project you are installing.

Are materials exceeding cost-effectiveness (rain catchment) fundable through the programs?

Many high-quality tanks, accessories, and shipping costs exceed cost effectiveness guidelines of the programs. On its own, a system like this would only be eligible through the MSD Program as DWCA requires plant-based solutions. In terms of scoring, a project that proposes 0 plants and only one feature that also scores low on cost-effectiveness would most likely score too low to be competitive and may end up on a waitlist. However, keep in mind that through the MSD Program, scoring depends on the size of the feature. It is possible that a large cistern could score high enough to cancel out points lost for low cost-effectiveness.



Frequently Asked Questions

MSD Rainscaping Small Grants Program &
Deer Creek Watershed Alliance Rainscaping Cost-Share Program



Should the budget section of the application be filled in if all the information is on a bid?

For both programs, it is okay to write “see attached contractor bid” on the material/budget sections of the application. However, the contractor bid should still be itemized to show expenses related to labor and materials. **DCWA Cost-Share** applicants should still fill out the budget summary (item 12).

Are participants held accountable for maintenance of their projects?

Maintenance is a leading challenge of native plant landscapes and both Programs offer some maintenance support to landowners. Poorly maintained features will not perform well long-term, and may discourage others from installing their own rainscaping, even if they would benefit from it.

Applicants to the **DCWA Cost-Share Program** may include maintenance expenses in their project budget as they are eligible for reimbursement at the same 75% rate as installation expenses.

Maintenance expenses are not eligible for reimbursement through the **MSD Small Grants Program**. However, we randomly select projects for maintenance follow up visits 1-2 years after installation. During these visits, participants may ask questions and share challenges with Program representatives who offer recommendations on maintenance when applicable.

Are there any maps that show where funded projects have been installed?

Currently, the Rainscaping Team does not have any publicly visible maps to show where MSD Small Grants or Cost-Share projects have been installed, as we keep participant names and addresses private.

For examples of installed projects, you can review photos on the Deer Creek Watershed Alliance website (deercreekalliance.org/rainscaping_projects), look for native gardening/rainscaping videos on the Missouri Prairie Foundation’s YouTube channel, or sign up for garden tours hosted throughout the region.