

# PLYMOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL EXTRA

## City completes Elm Creek stream restoration project

A two-year project recently completed in Plymouth will help benefit water quality in northwest Plymouth and, ultimately, the Mississippi River. The Elm Creek stream restoration project, completed December 2016, is expected to remove 185 pounds of phosphorus from the creek annually.

A collaboration among the city, the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission and Hennepin County, the project helped stabilize the streambank of Elm Creek to prevent further erosion and downstream nutrient loading. The project area included 4,500 feet of Elm Creek, which extended north of Wayzata High School and from the former Elm Creek Golf Course east to Peony Lane.

“We have beautiful lakes, streams and wooded areas in Plymouth – and it’s easy to take them for granted,” said Water Resources Manager Derek Asche. “But it’s important to remember that pristine natural settings in an urban or suburban environment require management and upkeep.”

The \$750,000 project was budgeted in the city’s Capital Improvement Program and supported with funding from ECWMC and a Hennepin County natural resources grant.

### *The Problem with Nutrients*

Prior to the project, water quality monitoring indicated that approximately 1,750 pounds of phosphorus were deposited annually into Elm Creek as it travels through Plymouth. Phosphorus is a pollutant that makes its way into the water through erosion and stormwater runoff from rooftops, sidewalks and roads.

“When there’s excess phosphorus in the water, it encourages the growth of aquatic plants,” said Asche.



*The Elm Creek stream restoration project is expected to remove 185 pounds of phosphorus from the creek annually, improving water quality in northwest Plymouth and beyond.*

“It causes algae to grow and makes the water unappealing for fish and other desirable organisms.”

### *Improving Water Quality*

To capture excess phosphorus, the project included the installation of iron-enhanced sand filters adjacent to two water quality ponds near Wayzata High School. These ponds remove about 80 percent of the phosphate load from stormwater runoff on high school property before it enters Elm Creek.

As stormwater travels through the filters, the iron rusts and creates absorption sites for the phosphate ions, removing them from the water. Continued rusting creates more absorption sites and allows the filters to be effective for more than 20 years.

Several grade control structures were also installed as part of the project, including rock cross vanes, root wads and cover boulders, with corresponding educational signage developed by Wayzata High School student Gabrielle Bobgan. These techniques help prevent erosion by providing structural support to the stream banks, repairing the biological integrity of the stream, controlling the grading and improving oxygen levels in the water.

## Avoid the landfill: Options for organics

According to Hennepin County, 30 percent of what residents throw away consists of organics, food scraps and food-soiled paper products – but it doesn’t have to be that way.

Alternate options are available to help some organics avoid the landfill.

Organics is a term that may include items such as food waste, pizza boxes, paper towels, napkins, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, cotton balls, popsicle sticks and certified compostable products.

The following options are available to residents to help reduce waste.

**Backyard composting.** One option to reduce organic waste is backyard composting. In Plymouth, items such as garden waste, raw fruit and vegetable scraps, leaves, grass clippings and pinecones can be turned into nutrient-rich compost, ideal for landscaping and gardening. For details, visit [plymouthmn.gov/compost](http://plymouthmn.gov/compost).

**Organics drop-off.** Residents can recycle organic waste by bringing it to the Hennepin County Recycling Center



*Residents can reduce waste by composting vegetables and other organics, bringing them to a drop-off or arranging for collection.*

and Transfer Station, 8100 Jefferson Highway, Brooklyn Park. Bring identification. For hours and information, visit [hennepin.us/organics](http://hennepin.us/organics).

**Curbside collection.** Some garbage haulers in Plymouth offer organics collection in addition to regular garbage collection. Contact your garbage hauler for details.



*Grab your gardening gloves and volunteer. The city is seeking volunteers for a variety of Earth-friendly activities, including the annual Flower Planting Day.*

## Volunteer for the environment

Roll up those sleeves and pitch in around the city. Plenty of Earth-friendly volunteer opportunities are available, including adopting a park, trail or storm drain.

For more information about these and other opportunities, call 763-509-5230 or email [volunteer@plymouthmn.gov](mailto:volunteer@plymouthmn.gov).

### *Flower Planting Day*

Grab some gardening tools and volunteer for Flower Planting Day, set for 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, May 20. Volunteers help add vibrancy and color to Plymouth by planting flowers in various parks and facility gardens. No experience is necessary.

### *Tree Planting Day*

Leave a legacy for future generations with Tree Planting Day, 8 a.m. to noon Sunday, June 4 along the Northwest Greenway. Construction began on the Greenway in 2015 with a trail that will stretch from Lake Camelot on the east to Wayzata High School on the west.

Since 2000, the city has been working toward its vision of the Greenway – a more than 350-acre reserve of land with a carefully situated looping paved trail allowing access for walkers and bikers. For details about the Greenway, visit [plymouthmn.gov/nwgreenway](http://plymouthmn.gov/nwgreenway).

### *Buckthorn Busts*

The City of Plymouth is seeking volunteers to help with three upcoming Buckthorn Busts – Saturdays Oct. 21, Oct. 28 and Nov. 4 at Maple Creek Park, 2695 Weston Lane N.

Buckthorn Busts are typically scheduled each fall to help remove the invasive species from different areas of the city. The events are ideal volunteer opportunities for groups or families.

According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, buckthorn is designated as a restricted noxious weed in Minnesota. The invasive species chokes out native plants, reproduces rapidly and dominates the area.

Weed wrenches and other tools can be borrowed from the city. Resources needed for busts include gardening gloves, shovels, loppers and a hand-held saw.

### *Gardening*

Those with green thumbs should consider gardening in Plymouth. Volunteers are needed to help maintain gardens around city buildings, as well as the Plymouth Creek Center’s Millennium Garden, 14800 34th Ave. N.







Get rid of items not collected at the curb at Drop-Off Day, including appliances, electronics, tires, bicycles and more.

## Drop-Off Day is April 29

Drop-Off Day is set for 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, April 29 at the Plymouth Maintenance Facility, 14900 23rd Ave. N. Plymouth residents only; bring identification. Drop-Off Day features two lines – one for recycling and donation items, and one for disposal items. Cost for the disposal line is \$20 per vehicle, per trip, while the recycle and donate line is free. Some vehicles may need to move through both lines. For details and a list of accepted items for each line, visit [plymouthmn.gov/dropoff](http://plymouthmn.gov/dropoff).

## Plymouth Recycling Guide

Residents are encouraged to recycle the following:

### Paper

- Mail, office and school papers
- Magazines and catalogs
- Newspapers and inserts
- Phone books
- Envelopes with window



### Boxes

- Cardboard (inside cart only)
- Cereal and cracker boxes
- Shoe boxes, gift boxes and electronic boxes
- Toothpaste, medication and other toiletry boxes

### Cartons

- Milk cartons
- Juice boxes
- Soup, broth and wine cartons



### Metal

Food and beverage cans

### Plastic

Please leave plastic lids on containers.



### Bottles and Jugs

- Water, soda and juice bottles
- Milk and juice jugs
- Ketchup and salad dressing bottles
- Dishwashing liquid bottles and detergent jugs
- Shampoo, soap and lotion bottles



### Cups and Containers

- Up to 9 inches in diameter
- Yogurt, pudding and fruit cups
- Disposable cups and bowls
- Margarine, cottage cheese and other containers
- Produce, deli, take out and baby wipe containers

### Packaging

- Clear packaging from toys and electronics



### Glass

Food and beverage bottles and jars

### Do Not Recycle

Plastic bags or wrap, polystyrene, cords or holiday lights, garden hoses or edging, batteries, scrap metal, toys, frozen food containers, tissue paper, dry cleaner bags, light bulbs, electronics, hazardous waste, aerosol cans, microwavable food trays, paper soiled with food, paper cups and plates, paper towels, hardcover books, drinking glasses, window glass, dishes, hangers, mirrors and containers that held hazardous products. For more information, visit [plymouthmn.gov/recycling](http://plymouthmn.gov/recycling), call 763-509-5906 or email [recycling@plymouthmn.gov](mailto:recycling@plymouthmn.gov).

# City offers low-cost trees, shrubs

Residents can invest in their yards with the city's annual low-cost tree and shrub sale. The sale runs Wednesday, March 1 through Monday, May 1 on the city's website, [plymouthmn.gov/treesale](http://plymouthmn.gov/treesale).

Each year, city staff selects plants that are well-adapted to local growing conditions and resistant to pests and diseases.

They serve as good replacements for ash trees affected by Emerald Ash Borer or invasive species, such as buckthorn.

These plants also provide food and shelter for pollinators, butterflies and other wildlife.

This year's sale offers 10 varieties of trees, six shrubs and four fruit plants.

Most of the trees are bare root and 5-6 feet tall at time of purchase. Bare-root trees cost less, are easier to transport and have up to 200 percent more roots than the traditional balled and burlapped plants.

### Get Help Choosing the Right Plants

Before placing an order online, get help choosing the right trees, shrubs and fruit plants for the yard. City



With vibrant colors in late spring, Yankee Doodle Lilac is one of the plants featured in this year's tree and shrub sale. Orders will be accepted through May 1.

forestry staff will be available to offer advice and answer questions about this year's plant selections at the following events:

- **Tree & Shrub Sale Preview** – 6:30-7:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 1 at Plymouth City Hall, 3400 Plymouth Blvd.
- **City Sampler** – 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, March 4 at Plymouth City Hall

# Adopt a storm drain, mark it up

Residents are encouraged to adopt a neighborhood storm drain and ensure it is kept free of sticks, leaves and debris.

It's easy to do – just a rake or broom and some gloves are needed. Once it's open for the season, sticks and leaves can be deposited at the Plymouth Yard Waste Site, 14900 23rd Ave. N. Litter can be trashed or recycled.

Cleaning storm drains is essential to protecting lakes, streams and wetlands from excess pollutants and nutrients, which encourage the growth of algae.

To adopt a storm drain, call the city's volunteer coordinator at 763-509-5230 or email [volunteer@plymouthmn.gov](mailto:volunteer@plymouthmn.gov).

### Storm Drain-Marking Kits Available

The City of Plymouth loans storm drain-marking kits to residents. The message – no dumping, drains to lake – helps educate neighbors about storm drains and their relationship to water quality.

Residents are encouraged to borrow the kits and mark their neighborhood storm drains to help remind passersby that water and debris drains straight into lakes, streams and wetlands untreated.



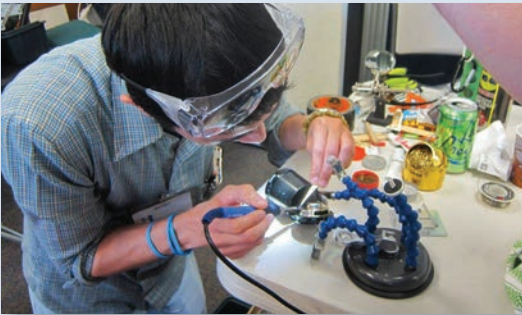
Cleaning storm drains is essential to protecting lakes, streams and wetlands from excess pollutants and nutrients.

"Marking storm drains is a great weekend project for a family, Boy or Girl Scouts or small church groups," said Senior Engineering Technician Ben Scharenbroich. "It's meant to raise neighborhood awareness."

For more information or to borrow a kit, call 763-509-5527. Kits can be picked up at Plymouth City Hall, 3400 Plymouth Blvd.



## UPCOMING EVENTS



**Hennepin County Fix-It Clinic** – 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 8, Plymouth Creek Center, 14800 34th Ave. N. Free. If you have a broken item at home, don't throw it away – fix it. The clinic provides an opportunity for residents to learn valuable troubleshooting and basic repair skills, and reduce waste. Bring in small appliances, clothing, electronics, mobile devices and more. For details, visit [www.hennepin.us/fixitclinic](http://www.hennepin.us/fixitclinic).

**Free Shredding** – Free paper shredding is available at Drop-Off Day, 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, April 29 at the Plymouth Maintenance Facility, 14900 23rd Ave. N. Plymouth residents only. For details, visit [plymouthmn.gov/dropoff](http://plymouthmn.gov/dropoff).

**Plant Swap** – 4:30-6:30 p.m. Monday, June 5, Plymouth Maintenance Facility, 14900 23rd Ave. N. Free. Bring perennials or gardening wares, such as seeds, pots, tools and books, and swap them out for new plants at this Stewards for Greening Plymouth event.

**Kids Fest** – 6-9 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 3, Hilde Performance Center, 3500 Plymouth Blvd. Features carnival games, live entertainment, activities and interactive ecofriendly fun for children.



**Creating Resilient Yards Workshop** – 6-9 p.m. Tuesday, April 11, St. Barnabas Church, 15600 Old Rockford Road. Free for Plymouth residents. Learn to create a resilient yard at this Metro Blooms workshop. Receive recommendations and options for establishing mowable, native alternatives to turf from landscape designers, Master Gardeners, Master Water Stewards and more. To register, call 651-699-2426.

