



# NATURE IN THE CITY MAINTENANCE TIPS

## THOUGHTFUL OBSERVATION

During the first few months of establishment **CHECK IN ON YOUR GARDEN EVERY WEEK** to make sure your new plants are settling in as planned. Take pictures and keep a journal to document issues of possible concern. **DURING YOUR VISIT, ASK YOURSELF:**

- Do plants appear wilted?
- Do leaves appear crunchy or discolored (yellow, spotted)?
- Are critters having a feast (holey leaves, missing leaves)?
- Are materials shifting? Are puddles forming?
- If I probe 3-4" down into the soil, is it moist? If so, is it soggy (too wet)? - or does it feel bone dry?

Make adjustments and seek out additional guidance from Nature in the City (NIC) if needed.

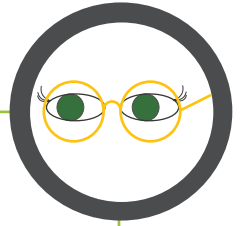
**Remember: it may take native plants up to two or three years to become established enough to bloom. Be patient with these little guys as they spend their first years putting most of their energy into building strong roots.**

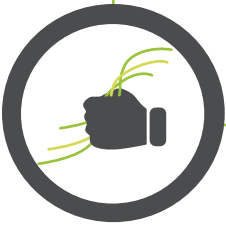
## IRRIGATION

The key to success is **DEEP AND INFREQUENT WATERING** to encourage plants to build healthy root systems. The species that have been selected for your project are accustomed to very little rainfall and like to dry out between waterings. If soil is *too damp for too long*, roots might suffocate and crown rot might develop! There is no magic formula, but NIC has had good luck with drip irrigation that follows a **SOAK| SPLASH** cycle:

- During the growing season (May-November), give plants a good **SOAK** once per week (preferably at night or in the early morning). Run time depends on your soil, slope, shade/sun, etc., but somewhere between 20-30 minutes might be a good place to start.
- Once (or twice) per week, give plants a **SPLASH**: quick, 5-8 minute watering just to cool them off.
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**For example: On Wednesday, SOAK for 20 minutes at 10:00 pm; on Friday, SPLASH for 5 minutes at 5:00 am.**





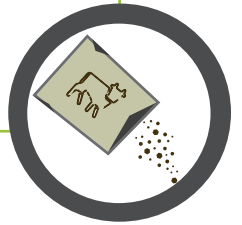
## WEEDING

To keep weeds under control, bi-weekly hand weeding is highly recommended during the growing season (May-November). Common invaders to be on the lookout for include: **Field Bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis* - very aggressive and moves quickly!)**; **Thistles (Canada, Russian, Musk)**; Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*); Common Mallow (*Malva neglecta*); **Common Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*)**; Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*); **Kocha (*Kochia scoparia*)**; Leafy Spurge (*Euphorbia esula*); Prostrate Knotweed (*Polygonum aviculare*); Puncturevine (*Tribulus terrestris*); and, Yellow Toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*).



## FERTILIZING

**DON'T!** (unless some kind of deficiency is suspected or extremely poor soil conditions are present). The native plants selected for this garden are accustomed to low nutrient soils.



## MULCHING

If using organic mulch (i.e. wood chips), **DON'T OVER MULCH!** Rule of thumb: only 1" deep around perennials, 3-4" around trees and shrubs. In all applications, pull mulch back 2-3" from the plant crown to prevent rot. Note that some prairie plants won't be big fans of mulch (too nutrient rich and holds too much water).

## GROOMING | TIDY-UP

To dead head or not to dead head . . . the choice is yours! Different tidy-up techniques (i.e. trimming back grass, cutting off seed heads) will produce a different experience and habitat conditions: i.e. dead heading flowers may encourage a second round of blooms in the summer, but may rob birds and overwintering insects of a food source and shelter in the winter. Research what works well for the species in your garden, and consult with NIC staff.



**If you aren't sure what to do, remember that "do nothing" is an option! Plants in the wild just do their thing.**



## QUESTIONS? CONTACT US!

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