

Regular Inspection and Maintenance Guidance for Bioretention Systems / Tree Filters

Maintenance of bioretention systems and tree filters can typically be performed as part of standard landscaping. Regular inspection and maintenance is critical to the effective operation of bioretention systems and tree filters to insure they remain clear of leaves and debris and free draining. This page provides guidance on maintenance activities that are typically required for these systems, along with the suggested frequency for each activity. Individual systems may have more, or less, frequent maintenance needs, depending on a variety of factors including the occurrence of large storm events, overly wet or dry (I.E., drought), regional hydrologic conditions, and the upstream land use.

ACTIVITIES

The most common maintenance activity is the removal of leaves from the system and bypass structure. Visual inspections are routine for system maintenance. This includes looking for standing water, accumulated leaves, holes in the soil media, signs of plant distress, and debris and sediment accumulation in the system. Mulch and/or vegetation coverage is integral to the performance of the system, including infiltration rate and nutrient uptake. Vegetation care is important to system productivity and health.

ACTIVITY	FREQUENCY
A record should be kept of the time to drain for the system completely after a storm event. The system should drain completely within 72 hours.	
Check to insure the filter surface remains well draining after storm events. Remedy: If filter bed is clogged, draining poorly, or standing water covers more than 15% of the surface 48 hours after a precipitation event, then remove top few inches of discolored material. Till or rake remaining material as needed.	After every major storm in the first few months, then biannually.
Check inlets and outlets for leaves and debris. Remedy: Rake in and around the system to clear it of debris. Also, clear the inlet and overflow if obstructed.	Quarterly initially, biannually, frequency adjusted as needed after 3 inspections
Check for animal burrows and short circuiting in the system. Remedy: Soil erosion from short circuiting or animal boroughs should be repaired when they occur. The holes should be filled and lightly compacted	
Check to insure the filter bed does not contain more than 2 inches accumulated material Remedy: Remove sediment as necessary. If 2 inches or more of filter bed has been removed, replace media with either mulch or a (50% sand, 20% woodchips, 20% compost, 10% soil) mixture.	
During extended periods without rainfall, inspect plants for signs of distress. Remedy: Plants should be watered until established (typical only for first few months) or as needed thereafter.	
Inspect inlets and outlets to ensure good condition and no evidence of deterioration. Check to see if high-flow bypass is functioning. Remedy: Repair or replace any damaged structural parts, inlets, outlets, sidewalls.	Annually
Check for robust vegetation coverage throughout the system. Remedy: If at least 50 % vegetation coverage is not established after 2 years, reinforcement planting should be performed.	
Check for dead or dying plants, and general long term plant health. Remedy: This vegetation should be cut and removed from the system. If woody vegetation is present, care should be taken to remove dead or decaying plant Material. Separation of Herbaceous vegetation rootstock should occur when over-crowding is observed.	As needed

CHECKLIST FOR INSPECTION OF BIORETENTION SYSTEM / TREE FILTERS

Location:

Inspector:

Date:

Time:

Site Conditions:

Date Since Last Rain Event:

Inspection Items	Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U)		Comments/Corrective Action
1. Initial Inspection After Planting and Mulching			
Plants are stable, roots not exposed	S	U	
Surface is at design level, typically 4" below overpass	S	U	
Overflow bypass / inlet (if available) is functional	S	U	
2. Debris Cleanup (2 times a year minimum, Spring & Fall)			
Litter, leaves, and dead vegetation removed from the system	S	U	
Prune perennial vegetation	S	U	
3. Standing Water (1 time a year, After large storm events)			
No evidence of standing water after 72 hours	S	U	
4. Short Circuiting & Erosion (1 times a year, After large storm events)			
No evidence of animal burrows or other holes	S	U	
No evidence of erosion	S	U	
5. Drought Conditions (As needed)			
Water plants as needed	S	U	
Dead or dying plants	S	U	
6. Overflow Bypass / Inlet Inspection (1 times a year, After large storm events)			
No evidence of blockage or accumulated leaves	S	U	
Good condition, no need for repair	S	U	
7. Vegetation Coverage (once a year)			
50 % coverage established throughout system by first year	S	U	
Robust coverage by year 2 or later	S	U	
8. Mulch Depth (if applicable)(once every 2 years)			
Mulch at original design depth after tilling or replacement	S	U	
9. Vegetation Health (once every 3 years)			
Dead or decaying plants removed from the system	S	U	
10. Tree Pruning (once every 3 years)			
Prune dead, diseased, or crossing branches	S	U	
Corrective Action Needed			Due Date
1.			
2.			
3.			