



A boy at Stillwater's Washington Square Park looks on as James Swirsky shoots footage for one of the MS4 Toolkit videos.

## Canuks in Minnesota

Last month filmmaker James Swirsky and his shooting partner from Blink Works traveled down from Winnipeg to shoot footage for two training videos that will be in the MS4 Education Toolkit. Both videos are designed for MS4 staff training. One will cover general parks maintenance to prevent stormwater pollution and the other will cover basic rain garden maintenance.

We are grateful to Stillwater Public Works for loaning two of their staff, Matt and Mary as actors for the film and for allowing us to use Washington Square Park as a site for filming. Washington County Parks also

volunteered Big Marine Park as a location for some of the footage.

James will be creating a rough cut of the videos some time this fall, with a final product ready in the spring. The goal is to create training videos that can convey important messages without being dull and boring. Stay tuned for a sneak preview later this fall!

**A Millions Shades of Autumn  
Healthy Waters and Heritage Fair  
September 27-28, 10am-4pm  
William O'Brien State Park - FREE!  
[www.greatrivergreening.org/healthywaters.asp](http://www.greatrivergreening.org/healthywaters.asp)**

Get outside and enjoy fall colors in the St. Croix Valley. This event will celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the St. Croix River's Wild and Scenic status as well as local conservation projects in the St. Croix Valley. Participants can see a Voyageurs Encampment, race a canoe down the St. Croix River or try their hands at fly-fishing. Washington Conservation District will have a booth and be conducting rain garden workshops. Also - native plantings, buckthorn pulling, shoreline stabilization & more.

**Water Consortium BMP Tour  
Wednesday, Oct. 1, 8:30am-3:30pm  
Meet at WCD office in Stillwater - FREE!  
Includes bus and box lunches**

Join us to tour several new water quality projects in the St. Croix Valley. Meet at the WCD office in the morning, then climb on the bus to tour projects, including the new Big Marine Regional Park in May Twp., Water Tower Park and Chisago Government Building, and rain garden, porous pavement and stream-bank projects at private residences. We will have box lunches at the Chisago Government Center and return to WCD offices by 3:30pm. Please RSVP to Angie Hong ([angie.hong@mnwcd.org](mailto:angie.hong@mnwcd.org)).



A business park with native prairie and wetland landscaping instead of lawn in Lake Elmo



A residential garden in Rice Creek Watershed that combines native and horticultural varieties

## Focus groups in southern Washington County highlight barriers and bring out suggestions for improving outreach

Last month Kay Qualley (U of M CURA researcher) and myself conducted three focus group sessions with about 30 people living in southern Washington County. The goal of the discussions was to determine what barriers prevent people from planting native plants, raingardens and shoreline plantings (especially in “harder to reach” communities) and to elicit suggestions for improving the success of our outreach in all parts of the EMWREP area.

Kay spent a few weeks collecting contact information for key people in Woodbury, Cottage Grove and other nearby communities and assembled a list of lake association residents, Chamber members, active community volunteers and other community leaders, which will help greatly with future outreach. During the sessions, we asked people to talk about local water resources and their landscaping preferences and also showed them pictures of native plantings and raingardens.

Kay and I will be presenting our findings at the St. Croix Research Rendezvous on Oct. 21 ([www.smm.org/scwrs/programs/rendezvous](http://www.smm.org/scwrs/programs/rendezvous)) and will have the report available for partners to read soon. Here are some early findings:

- o People expressed concern about and interest in protecting the quality of their water resources.
- o Initial reactions to photos of native plantings included concern about weeding, maintenance needs and lack of color. Positive reactions also included creating wildlife habitat, bringing the country into the city and having a unique look. In general people liked a more manicured look (see photo at the top right) better than a “wilder” look (see photo at top left).
- o People were in general receptive to the idea of raingardens but most had not heard of Blue Thumb or raingardens. They were excited about cost-share programs and free site visits.
- o Recommendations for “selling” the Blue Thumb program included utilizing signage to let people know that plantings are intentional, creating more manicured plantings (or using borders, fences, etc. to show that they are intentional), planting to maintain color throughout the year, and advertising cost-share grants and free site visits.

### Members of the East Metro Water Resource Education Program:

Brown’s Creek Watershed • Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed • Cottage Grove  
• Dellwood • Forest Lake • Lower St. Croix Watershed • Lake Elmo • Middle St.  
Croix Watershed • Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed • Rice Creek Watershed  
• Stillwater • South Washington Watershed • Valley Branch Watershed • Willernie  
• West Lakeland • Washington Conservation District • Washington County

