Watershed One-liners

Communicating best practices in short sound bites while covering the MS4 bases.

Winter maintenance:

* When salting is necessary, strive for 3” between grains of salt – salt melts more than what the crystal touches.
* If you see leftover salt on dry pavement, it was overdone.
* 1 teaspoon of rock salt permanently pollutes 5 gallons of freshwater.
* Don’t wait for the storm to end! Shovel early and often to reduce the need to apply salt and dodge the heavy lifting.

Lawncare:

* Turf only needs about 1”/week to survive – this includes watering plus rainfall.
* Odd/even watering days are helpful to reduce peak flow, but don’t automatically mean you should water that day. Paying attention to what the lawn needs and striving for 1”/week keeps the lawn alive while conserving water for more important uses.
* Try allowing your lawn to go dormant in dry periods – turf is able to go dormant in the summer similar to winter dormancy, and will green up again when rain returns.
* Mowing at a 3” height is one of the most effective and easiest ways to retain moisture on the lawn, helping to buffer dry times.
* Mowing at a 3” height helps to shelter soil, resist weeds, absorb air pollutants, and keep nutrients where they belong (on land and out of water).
* To support clean lakes and healthy wetlands from home, sweep grass clippings off pavement and back up onto the lawn.
* Mulching leaves into the lawn with a mower for an entire fall season is roughly equivalent to an application of fertilizer.
* Skipping spring fertilizing encourages turf to invest more in roots than in blade growth – this means reduced mowing and a more resilient yard for the rest of the year.

Native plants:

* The deep roots of native plants create an underground “soil factory” – a structure for fungi, microorganisms, and beneficial bacteria. These work the soil and open up passages for water and air to pass through. More spaces of healthy, active soil add up to a productive underground “factory” that supports clean lakes and groundwater.
* Native plantings benefit not just pollinators but also birds and other wildlife – and they enhance soil and water quality.
* Native plants provide higher standing vegetation, and this benefits the watershed in several ways. They physical protection slows down runoff, reduces splashing, and protects soil from erosion. They also support decomposition and balanced soil temps, which are small but important details that make up the comforts of clean air and water that we enjoy.
* Native plants come in a wide spectrum that echoes the historical, pre-settlement landscape. Because of this, native plants can fit into wetland, upland, and even transition zones. Many times this transition zone is treated as a problem, but chances are there’s a native plant that can help flip the problem into an asset!

Other:

* Try washing your car on the lawn to reduce soapy runoff – it’ll help protect local lakes and wetlands, and may start a fun conversation with a neighbor!
* Neglected pet waste can take up to 1 year to break down, all the while sending excess nutrients and harmful bacteria and pathogens into local waterbodies, plus needlessly exposing people and pets to these health risks.
* 1 lb of phosphorus can generate up to 500 lbs of algae. Keeping grass clippings out of the street and never dumping them in ditches or wetlands keeps phosphorus where it belongs – out of the water and in the soil.
* Everyone has waterfront property – your boulevard and nearest stormdrain connect directly to a lake, stream, or wetland without treatment.
* Stormponds are designed to catch sediment and excess nutrients before the water from nearby development gets to a lake, stream, or wetland. Unsightly stormponds may be due for maintenance, but this also means they’ve done their job.
* Only rain down the drain.