**Condos and townhomes are going green**

One of the biggest benefits to living in a condo is having a property management company that takes care of drudgeries like mowing, shoveling, and raking leaves. Because they are hiring out the work, most management companies prefer landscaping that is simple and easy to maintain. Recently, however, some Minnesota condos and townhomes have begun to break the mold and are incorporating native plantings and raingardens that don’t need to be watered and help to create habitat for pollinators and birds.

Evergreen Country Homes is in Woodbury near the Tamarack Nature Preserve. In 2015, the association approached Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District to ask for advice in dealing with drainage problems on their property. Due to compacted clay soils and a berm along the edge of their land, there was standing water whenever it rained and the lawn rarely dried out enough for people to walk on it. When landscape designer Tara Kline came out for a site visit, she suggested changing the landscaping so that more water would soak into the ground – good for the people in the neighborhood – and less would runoff into the nature preserve – good for the tamarack bog.

Working with board members from the association, Kline put together a design that replaced around 3,325 square feet of turf with native plants. The swale features “thirsty” shrubs like dogwood that soak up lots of water, as well as plants like cup plant, joe pyweed, blue flag iris, and sedges that provide both beauty and habitat. Importantly, Kline also put a lot of effort into creating a design that would be easy for a landscaping company to maintain. There are only a few species of plants and they are grouped in clumps, instead of being scattered throughout the planting. This makes it easier to identify and control weeds. The planting also has in-laid brick edging along its length, which makes it easier to mow around and helps to maintain a tidy appearance.

On the other side of town, the Lakeridge of Woodbury Homeowners’ Association installed two raingardens to help soak runoff rainwater into the ground so that it doesn’t flow downhill to the nearby Carver Lake. The project helped to reduce runoff pollution and keep the lawn drier for residents.

To learn about opportunities for your condo or townhome, contact [insert contact info here].