BIORETENTION

CVC/TRCA LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND DESIGN GUIDE - FACT SHEET

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

As a stormwater filter and infiltration practice, bioretention temporarily stores, treats and infiltrates runoff. Depending on native soil infiltration rate and physical constraints, the system may be designed without an underdrain for full infiltration, with an underdrain for partial infiltration, or with an impermeable liner and underdrain for filtration only (i.e., a biofilter). The primary component of the practice is the filter bed which is a mixture of sand, fines and organic material. Other elements include a mulch ground cover and plants adapted to the conditions of a stormwater practice. Bioretention is designed to capture small storm events or the water quality storage requirement. An overflow or bypass is necessary to pass large storm event flows. Bioretention can be adapted to fit into many different development contexts and provide a convenient area for snow storage and treatment.

Source: Minnesota Businesses for Clean Water

Source: City of Portland

DESIGN GUIDANCE

SOIL CHARACTERISTICS

Bioretention can be constructed over any soil type, but hydrologic soil group A and B are best for achieving water balance goals. If possible, bioretention should be sited in the areas of the development with the highest native soil infiltration rates. Bioretention in soils with infiltration rates less than 15 mm/hr will require an underdrain. Designers should verify the native soil infiltration rate at the proposed location and depth through measurement of hydraulic conductivity under field saturated conditions.

GEOMETRY & SITE LAYOUT

Key geometry and site layout factors include:

- The minimum footprint of the filter bed area is based on the drainage area. Typical drainage areas to bioretention are between 100 m2 to 0.5 hectares. The maximum recommended drainage area is 0.8 hectares. Typical ratios of impervious drainage area to treatment facility area range from 5:1 to 15:1.
- Bioretention can be configured to fit into many locations and shapes. However, cells that are narrow may concentrate flow as it spreads throughout the cell and result in erosion.
- The filter bed surface should be level to encourage stormwater to spread out evenly over the surface.

PRE-TREATMENT

Pretreatment prevents premature clogging by capturing coarse sediment particles before they reach the filter bed. Where the runoff source area produces little sediment, such as roofs, bioretention can function effectively without pretreatment. To treat parking area or road runoff, a two-cell design that incorporates a forebay is recommended. Pretreatment practices that may be feasible, depending on the method of conveyance and the availability of space include:

- *Two-cell design (channel flow):* Forebay ponding volume should account for 25% of the water quality storage requirement and be designed with a 2:1 length to width ratio.
- *Vegetated filter strip (sheet flow):* Should be a minimum of three (3) metres in width. If smaller strips are used, more frequent maintenance of the filter bed can be anticipated.
- *Gravel diaphragm (sheet flow):* A small trench filled with pea gravel, which is perpendicular to the flow path between the edge of the pavement and the bioretention practice will promote settling out of sediment and maintain sheet flow into the facility. A drop of 50-150 mm into the gravel diaphragm can be used to dissipate energy and promote settling.
- *Rip rap and/or dense vegetation (channel flow):* Suitable for small bioretention cells with drainage areas less than 100 square metres.

GRAVEL STORAGE LAYER

- DEPTH: Should be a minimum of 300 mm deep and sized to provide the required storage volume. Granular material should be 50 mm diameter clear stone.
- PEA GRAVEL CHOKING LAYER: A 100 mm deep layer of pea gravel (3 to 10 mm diameter clear stone) should be placed on top of the coarse gravel storage layer as a choking layer separating it from the overlying filter media bed.

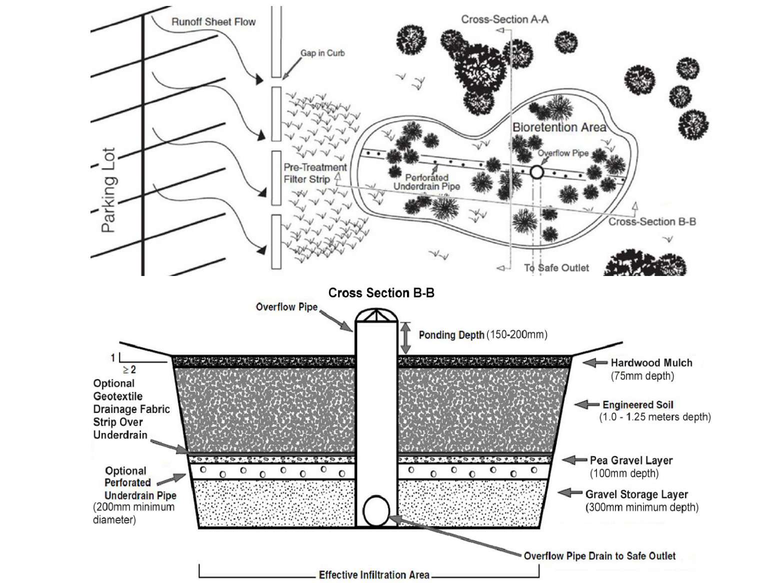
FILTER MEDIA

- COMPOSITION: To ensure a consistent and homogeneous bed, filter media should come pre-mixed from an approved vendor.
- DEPTH: Recommended depth is between 1.0 and 1.25 m. However in constrained applications, pollutant removal benefits may be achieved in beds as shallow as 500 mm. If trees are to be included in the design, bed depth must be at least 1.0 m.
- MULCH: A 75 mm layer of mulch on the surface of the filter bed enhances plant survival, suppresses weed growth and pretreats runoff before it reaches the filter bed.

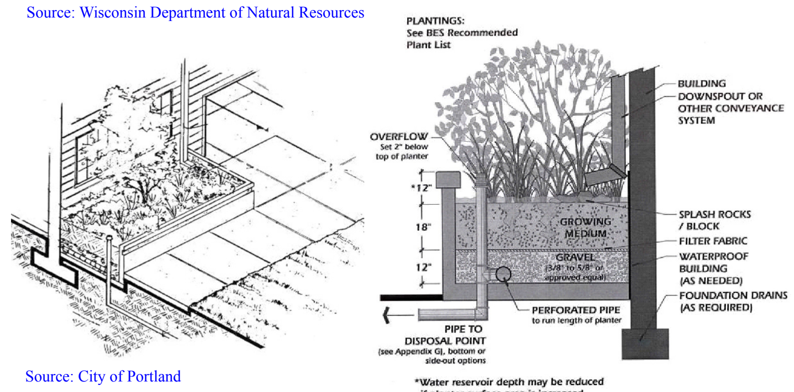
CONVEYANCE AND OVERFLOW

Bioretention can be designed to be inline or offline from the drainage system. Inline bioretention accepts all flow from a drainage area and conveys larger event flows through an overflow outlet. Overflow structures must be sized to safely convey larger storm events out of the facility. The invert of the overflow should be placed at the maximum water surface elevation of the bioretention area, which is typically 150-250 mm above the filter bed surface.

Offline bioretention practices use flow splitters or bypass channels that only allow the required water quality storage volume to enter the facility. This may be achieved with a pipe, weir, or curb opening sized for the target flow, but in conjunction, create a bypass channel so that higher flows do not pass over the surface of the filter bed. Using a weir or curb opening minimizes clogging and reduces maintenance frequency.



Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources



Source: City of Portland

ABILITY TO MEET SWM OBJECTIVES

BMP	Water Balance Benefit	Water Quality Improvement	Stream Channel Erosion Control Benefits
Bioretention with no underdrain	Yes	Yes - size for water quality storage requirement	Partial - based on available storage volume and infiltration rates
Bioretention with underdrain	Partial - based on available storage volume beneath the underdrain and soil infiltration rate	Yes - size for water quality storage requirement	Partial - based on available storage volume beneath the underdrain and soil infiltration rate
Bioretention with underdrain and impermeable liner	Partial - some volume reduction through evapotranspiration	Yes - size for water quality storage requirement	Partial - some volume reduction through evapotranspiration

UNDERDRAIN

- Only needed where native soil infiltration rate is less than 15 mm/hr (hydraulic conductivity of less than 1x10-6 cm/s).
- Should consist of a perforated pipe embedded in the coarse gravel storage layer at least 100 mm above the bottom.
- A strip of geotextile filter fabric placed between the filter media and pea gravel choking layer over the perforated pipe is optional to help prevent fine soil particles from entering the underdrain.
- A vertical standpipe connected to the underdrain can be used as a cleanout and monitoring well.

MONITORING WELLS

A capped vertical stand pipe consisting of an anchored 100 to 150 mm diameter perforated pipe with a lockable cap installed to the bottom of the facility is recommended for monitoring drainage time between storms.

GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS

Material	Specification	Quantity
Filter Media Composition	Filter Media Soil Mixture to contain: • 85 to 88% sand • 8 to 12% soil fines • 3 to 5% organic matter (leaf compost) Other Criteria: • Phosphorus soil test index (P-Index) value between 10 to 30 ppm • Cationic exchange capacity (CEC) greater than 10 meq/100 g • Free of stones, stumps, roots and other large debris • pH between 5.5 to 7.5 • Infiltration rate greater than 25 mm/hr	Recommended depth is between 1.0 and 1.25 metres.
Mulch Layer	Shredded hardwood bark mulch	A 75 mm layer on the surface of the filter bed
Geotextile	Material specifications should conform to Ontario Provincial Standard Specification (OPSS) 1860 for Class II geotextile fabrics. Should be woven monofilament or non-woven needle punched fabrics. Woven slit film and non-woven heat bonded fabrics should not be used as they are prone to clogging. For further guidance see CVC/TRCA LID SWM Planning and Design Guide, Table 4.5.5.	Strip over the perforated pipe underdrain (if present) between the filter media bed and gravel storage layer (stone reservoir)
Gravel	Washed 50 mm diameter clear stone should be used to surround the underdrain and for the gravel storage layer Washed 3 to 10 mm diameter clear stone should be used for pea gravel choking layer.	Volume based on dimensions, assuming a void space ratio of 0.4.
Underdrain	Perforated HDPE or equivalent, minimum 100 mm diameter, 200 mm recommended.	• Perforated pipe for length of cell. • Non-perforated pipe as needed to connect with storm drain system. • One or more caps. • T's for underdrain configuration

CONSTRUCTION CONSIDERATIONS

Ideally, bioretention sites should remain outside the limit of disturbance until construction of the bioretention begins to prevent soil compaction by heavy equipment. Locations should not be used as sediment basins during construction, as the concentration of fines will prevent post-construction infiltration. To prevent sediment from clogging the surface of a bioretention cell, stormwater should be diverted away from the bioretention until the drainage area is fully stabilized.

For further guidance regarding key steps during construction, see the CVC/TRCA LID SWM Planning and Design Guide, Section 4.5.2 - Construction Considerations)

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Bioretention requires routine inspection and maintenance of the landscaping as well as periodic inspection for less frequent maintenance needs or remedial maintenance. Generally, routine maintenance will be the same as for any other landscaped area; weeding, pruning, and litter removal. Regular watering may be required during the first two years until vegetation is established.

For the first two years following construction the facility should be inspected at least quarterly and after every major storm event (> 25 mm). Subsequently, inspections should be conducted in the spring and fall of each year and after major storm events. Inspect for vegetation density (at least 80% coverage), damage by foot or vehicular traffic, channelization, accumulation of debris, trash and sediment, and structural damage to pretreatment devices.

Trash and debris should be removed from pretreatment devices, the bioretention area surface and inlet and outlets at least twice annually. Other maintenance activities include reapplying mulch, pruning, weeding replacing dead vegetation and repairing eroded areas as needed. Remove accumulated sediment on the bioretention area surface when dry and exceeding 25 mm depth.

SITE CONSIDERATIONS

Wellhead Protection
Facilities receiving road or parking lot runoff should not be located within two (2) year time-of-travel wellhead protection areas.

Available Space
Reserve open areas of about 10 to 20% of the size of the contributing drainage area.

Site Topography
Contributing slopes should be between 1 to 5%. The surface of the filter bed should be flat to allow flow to spread out. A stepped multi-cell design can also be used.

Available Head
If an underdrain is used, then 1 to 1.5 metres elevation difference is needed between the inflow point and the downstream storm drain invert.

Water Table
A minimum of one (1) metre separating the seasonally high water table or top of bedrock elevation and the bottom of the practice is necessary.

Soils
Bioretention can be located over any soil type, but hydrologic soil group A and B soils are best for achieving water balance benefits. Facilities should be located in portions of the site with the highest native soil infiltration rates. Where infiltration rates are less than 15 mm/hr (hydraulic conductivity less than 1x10-6 cm/s) an underdrain is required. Native soil infiltration rate at the proposed facility location and depth should be confirmed through measurement of hydraulic conductivity under field saturated conditions.

Drainage Area & Runoff Volume
Typical contributing drainage areas are between 100 m2 to 0.5 hectares. The maximum recommended contributing drainage area is 0.8 hectares. Typical ratios of impervious drainage area to treatment facility area range from 5:1 to 15:1.

Pollution Hot Spot Runoff
To protect groundwater from possible contamination, runoff from pollution hot spots should not be treated by bioretention facilities designed for full or partial infiltration. Facilities designed with an impermeable liner (filtration only facilities) can be used to treat runoff from pollution hot spots.

Proximity to Underground Utilities
Designers should consult local utility design guidance for the horizontal and vertical clearances required between storm drains, ditches, and surface water bodies.

Overhead Wires
Check whether the future tree canopy height in the bioretention area will interfere with existing overhead phone and power lines.

Setback from Buildings
If an impermeable liner is used, no setback is needed. If not, a four (4) metre setback from building foundations should be applied.

TORONTO AND REGION Conservation for The Living City

CVC CREDIT VALLEY CONSERVATION

FOR FURTHER DETAILS SEE SECTION 4.5 OF THE CVC/TRCA LID SWM GUIDE