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Rain garden to protect ocean 1

Hardy plants to filter pollutants from rainwater

Hardy plants and special landscaping will replace some grassy boulevards as Victoria begins a pilot "rain garden."

DEBRA BRASH, TIMES COLONIST



Lyle Hurn of Michell Excavating works on a Trent Street site destined to be a rain garden, an area designed to filter runoff water before it gets to the ocean.

The project, expected to be completed in early September, will see a specially planted, 160square-metre area next to Trent Street, just off Fort Street.

Instead of flowing directly into Bowker Creek — part of the storm-drain system — and straight out to sea, rainwater from the road will flow into the rain garden, where it will irrigate the plants and be filtered of pollutants

Steven Fifield, Victoria manager of underground utilities, said hardy plants like grasses, sedges and a species of dogwood will be planted.

The plants will be watered with a sprinkler system for two years to allow them to become well established. Afterwards, they should be able to live off rainwater.

Fifield said one benefit of the garden is that rainwater running off the street will drain through the

dirt, where pollutants can be filtered out or broken down.

Materials such as oil and dog feces, a major cause of health warnings at local beaches, can be broken down by bacteria in the dirt.

The garden is designed so that major oil spills collect in a depressed area of the landscaping, where the oil can be cleaned up.

Fifield said if the pilot garden is successful, and city staff get a better idea how the rain garden functions, the design will be more widely used. "It will become one of the tools in our toolkit," he said.

Fifield estimated total cost of the rain garden at \$120,000. The city received a \$10,000 planning grant from the Ministry of Community and Rural Development.

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