

Stormwater Planters

Issue

The [Department of Environmental Services \(DES\)](#) has recently begun to require systems for stormwater retention to be installed on both residential and commercial properties. This requirement is sometimes met with Flow-Through Planters, Cisterns, etc. ("Planters" as referenced below) They may be attached to a building, freestanding, or buried in the ground. These systems contribute to the operation of a building and are accessory to its function. They are much like other equipment such as furnaces, heat pumps, french drains, air conditioners, etc. ancillary to the operation of a main building. They may also project from main or accessory buildings like balconies or platforms. They are not provided for in the [Zoning Ordinance](#). This advice addresses the issue of placement of these systems (planters).


Relevant ACZO Citations:

- Section 32.D.3.a - "No building or structure, or addition thereto, other than walls or fences, shall extend into a required setback area, yard or court; except that...the following unenclosed uses may extend therein no more than four (4) feet but not nearer than five (5) feet to any property line: Balconies; eaves, trim and fascia boards and similar architectural features; platforms and terraces."
- Section 32.D.3.b - "Air conditioning units are permitted in required side and rear yards, provided that they are in no event less than eight (8) feet from any side lot line or ten (10) feet from any rear lot line. However, air conditioning units screened with fence or vegetation may encroach into a required setback or yard, where it is located no closer than eight (8) feet to any front or rear lot line, and no closer than five (5) feet to any side lot line."

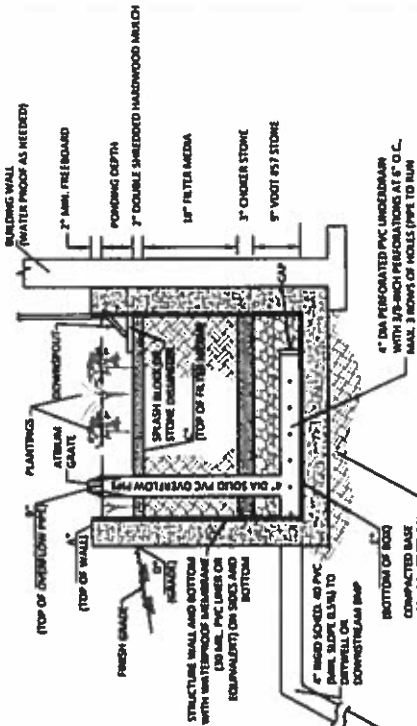
Response

Stormwater planters and similar features built to meet the stormwater quality requirements of DES should be treated, for placement purposes, either as projections from buildings (when attached to a main or accessory building on the lot) or as utility features similar to air conditioning units (when constructed as a separate structure from the other buildings). Stormwater planters are considered attached when they are fastened to the building or constructed as part of the foundation. When stormwater planters are projections, they may extend no more than four (4) feet into any required yard setback but not nearer than five (5) feet to any property line. When planters are separate structures, they may be located no closer than five (5) feet to any side lot line or eight (8) feet to any front or rear lot line. When stormwater planter walls are eight (8) inches or less above finished grade, irrespective of whether they are projections or separate structures, they may be located within any required yard or setback.

Other Information

- [Zoning Determinations and Advice by topic](#)
- [Arlington County Zoning Ordinance](#)
- [Advice: Stormwater Planters](#) 

[Check Permit Status](#)



TYPICAL PLANTER BOX

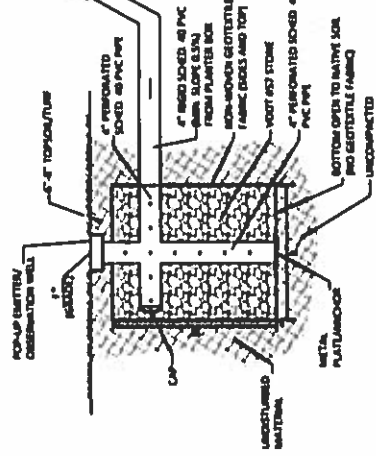
NOTES:

1. LENGTH (L) AND WIDTH (W) DIMENSIONS MUST BE A MINIMUM OF 3 FEET EACH.
2. NO STORAGE VOLUME CREDIT IS GIVEN FOR THE MATCH LAYER.
3. SEE VIRGINIA DEEP WATER DESIGN SPECIFICATION NO. 5 FOR ADDITIONAL DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION.
4. THE PLANTER BOX MAY BE CONTAINED IN A PRECAST CONCRETE, CAST-IN-PLACE CONCRETE OR 6"PS PRESSURE PRECAST MODULAR BLOCK SYSTEMS (WHEN A DESIGN SPECIFICATION NO. 9, SECTION 9-A-1).
5. SINCE PLANTER BOXES ARE LOCATED NEAR THE BUILDING FOUNDATION, WATERPROOFING BY USING A WATER-TIGHT CONCRETE SHELL OR AN IMPERMEABLE LINER IS REQUIRED TO PREVENT LEAKAGE OF WATER TO THE FOUNDATION OR TO THE PVC STAKEWORK.
6. CONTRACTOR TO ENSURE THAT THE PROPER DOWNPOUTS DISCHARGE INTO THE PLANTER BOX, OVER ROCK OR OTHER ENERGY DISSIPATION SHALL BE USED WHERE DOWNPOUTS DISCHARGE INTO THE PLANTER BOX.
7. FOR PLANTER BOXES ATTACHED TO THE FOUNDATION AND/OR A RETAINING WALL, SEE ARCHITECTURAL PLANS FOR STRUCTURAL DETAILS/REQUIREMENTS.

URBAN BMP DESIGN DATA

PLANTER BOX ID	ELEVATIONS						DRY WELL DIMENSIONS		
	A	B	C	D	E	F	L	W	H
1									
2									
3									

TYPICAL URBAN BIORETENTION BASIN
N.T.S.



TYPICAL DRYWELL

NOTES:

1. MINIMUM SIZE IS 2 FEET LONG BY 2 FEET WIDE BY 2 FEET HIGH.
2. THE UNDERDRAIN MUST DISCHARGE TO A DRY WELL AND MULTIPLE UNDERDRAINS MUST NOT DISCHARGE TO THE SAME LOCATION UNLESS IT IS DESIGNED FOR 25% OF THE REMAINING RUNOFF FROM THE BMP.
3. ALL CATCHES SHALL BE PLACED A MINIMUM OF 10 FEET FROM THE PROPERTY LINE FOR A COMPLIANT RESIDENTIAL AND A MINIMUM OF 5 FEET FROM THE PROPERTY LINE FOR AN UP-GRABBIT PROPERTY.
4. ANCHOR PLATE MUST BE 6" SQUARE METAL PLATE.

URBAN BIORETENTION - PLANTER BOX DETAIL