

why have a rain garden?

With a rain garden, you can prevent storm-water runoff from leaving your property and help it soak down into the ground. Sources of runoff include downspouts from rain gutters as well as pavement and large expanses of lawn. Runoff lowers the quality of nearby surface water by bringing in pollutants and eroding shorelines. Runoff can also increase flooding, deplete groundwater reserves, and lead to the building of costly water treatment infrastructures.

why use native plants?

Once established, native plants need very little maintenance. They improve your garden over time, as their deep roots break up the soil and absorb more runoff every year. Natives bring life to your garden, providing food and shelter for birds, butterflies, and beneficial insects, including mosquito-eating dragonflies. Natives bring beauty to your garden, offering a variety of blooms during the growing season and berries or sculptural seedheads during winter.

Native plants can be found at local or regional native plant nurseries.

you can be part of the solution!

It doesn't take a lot of time or money to build a rain garden, and even a small one can make a big difference to your nearby lakes and streams.

want more info?

Visit www.for-wild.org for:

- detailed instructions on the construction of a rain garden,
- a list of plant species native to your ecoregion,
- listings for regional and national educational websites,
- further information about Wild Ones, and to locate the Wild Ones chapter nearest you.

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THE WILD ONES MISSION

Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization.

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water quality
wildlife
beauty

Rain Gardens



what is a rain garden?

A rain garden is simply a shallow depression in your yard that holds stormwater runoff and helps it filter down into the ground. A rain garden isn't a pond, though it can be designed to include one. Rain gardens are typically dry much of the time, filling with water during a rainstorm and then emptying over the next few days.

where to put it?

Watch the water flow during your next rainstorm. Locate your rain garden in its path. Try to place your rain garden at least 10 feet from the house to keep water away from your foundation. Don't site the rain garden above a septic drain field. During your planning, check the locations of underground utilities.

what does it look like?

A typical rain garden is a basin about 6 to 12 inches deep with a 6-inch-high berm hugging its downhill side. The material excavated from the basin can be used to build the berm, while the basin is filled 2/3 of its depth with a mix of equal parts mulch, sand, and native soil. The basin should be set level in the ground and should have a flat bottom to spread water over the largest possible area. The design can include a spillway or a pipe through the berm with a removable cap to allow overflow to drain downslope past the rain garden.

what plants can grow there?

Choosing native plants that are well suited to the site will lower your maintenance considerably. Many plants that do well in rich garden soil can handle standing water for less than 24 hours. Deeper areas of the rain garden will retain water longest and should be planted

with plants that thrive in wet or seasonally wet environments.

The slopes of the basin and berm will be quicker draining and need plants that prefer drier conditions. Help your rain garden to "weather" an unpredictable climate by using plants that are adapted to a variety of conditions and by choosing a diverse mix of grasses and flowering plants.

how to care for it?

Mulch your plants after planting to keep soil moist and prevent erosion. Use a mulch that won't float away when the rain garden fills with water.

Weeding will be necessary for the first couple years as your young plants grow, but as your plants mature, they will crowd out weeds. It is easiest to pull weeds when the garden is moist. Mosquitoes may breed in water that stands for a week or more. The easiest way to reduce your mosquito population is to design your garden to absorb all the runoff within a few days. As insurance, you can bury a tube or pipe with a removable cap under your berm so you can drain off unwanted standing water from your rain garden.

