

Build a Rain Garden



Do you have a spot in your yard that tends to collect water? Do your downspouts run off into your yard? If so, perhaps you could build a rain garden to capture some of that rainwater runoff. This garden is a low spot that collects and infiltrates rain water using plants adapted to wet and moist soils.

Why Put in a Rain Garden?

- To solve an erosion, runoff or wet spot landscape issue;
- to improve water quality;
- to manage rain water/snow melt close to where it falls;
- to protect water quality in streams and rivers; and
- for beauty and enjoyment.

Install a Rain Garden in 5 Steps

1. Find the Right Location

- Near sources of stormwater runoff; at the end of a downspout
- At areas of erosion or saturated soils/wet spots
- Away from utilities, septic tanks, retaining walls

2. Test Your Soil and Size the Garden

- Percolation test; rain garden depth = amount of water that infiltrates in 24 hours

- Maximum depth is 18 inches.
- Fit the garden into your landscape.
- Remember, it is a GARDEN!

3. Design the Garden: Choose Your Plants

- Pay attention to the amount of sun and soil moisture conditions.
- Consider your maintenance “comfort zone.” How much time do I have or want to spend?
- Select trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses/sedges/rushes.

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4. Prepare the Garden Bed

- Mark out your garden area; remove existing grass or vegetation you are not keeping.
- Have all utilities marked! Call 800-dig-rite (344-7483) or 811. Fluff up the soil for happy plant roots, double-dig or rototill. Add compost or peat moss for greater infiltration. Avoid lots of walking or heavy equipment on wet soils, especially clay soils!

5. Plant Your Garden

Spring to fall is the best time to plant. Set out the plants according to your design. Move them around a bit for the look and spacing you like. Make planting day a family or community event. Water your plants. Protect the plants with shredded mulch.

Caring for Your Rain Garden

Spring - March and April

- When the weather is warm, rake leaves and other plant material from the rain garden; put this material in a compost pile.
- Pull any weeds starting to come up.
- Replace any dead plants. Divide plants that are getting too big and spread out too much. Plant them in other places in your yard or pass them on to a friend or neighbor.
- Add mulch to the rain garden if needed.



Summer - May to August

- Check your garden every 1-2 weeks. Are the plants growing well? Are weeds and weedy grasses starting to show up in your garden?
- Pull any weeds, like crab grass, from your garden throughout the summer. It is easier to pull the weeds when they are small.
- Water your garden, especially the first 2 years, if St. Joseph becomes dry (no rain for 2-3 weeks) during the hot summer. One inch of water per week is good. Use the water from your rain barrel!

Fall - September to November

- Continue to pull weeds and weedy grasses. They continue to sprout and grow during our nice fall weather. What pests!
- Rake leaves from the rain garden through October so the plants get sunlight and keep growing.
- Leave a layer of leaves for winter protection when November and frosty weather arrives.