

Rain Gardens

What is a Rain Garden? It is a purposeful planting landscape with water-loving plants that effectively handles storm water, channeling it slowly into the ground or collecting it as a small pond to slowly evaporate and function year-round.

When do we need Rain Gardens? In and around our cities, we've changed from a native landscape to an urban-suburban landscape over the past 150 years. The urban-suburban landscape absorbs only about 35% of the storm water than the comparable parcel of native prairie absorbed. A rain garden mimics natural conditions by slowly retaining rain. By planting rain gardens, we restore small segments of the natural landscape which will help restore watershed hydrology, trap pollutants and provide habitat for birds, butterflies and other watchable wildlife in an attractive garden.

Where should I plant my Rain Garden? Select your best site considering runoff sources such as your roof, driveway, site slopes and expanses of turf. Also, because you are creating a beautiful garden, remember to site your garden where it can be viewed for enjoyment. Locate your garden at least 10 feet away from your home to allow for air circulation, maintenance and to prevent holding water near your home's foundation. While you can plant a rain garden in a part shade location, a sunny spot that receives at least six hours of sunlight daily is best. (Of course, call 1-800-digsafe or local utilities prior to digging any home project).

How should I design my Rain Garden? Calculate the required area and number of plants. A simple rule of thumb is, runoff area, divide by three for your garden's square footage. Divide this number by 2.25 to find the number of plants spaced 18" apart. For example, imagine your runoff area is your roof, and you are planning a garden to treat storm water from one downspout. If your home's square footage is 2,000 sqft and you have 4 downspouts, first divide 2,000 by four to find 500 sqft, the runoff area. Next divide 500 by 3 to find the garden's square footage, or 167. Divide 167 by 2.25 to find the number of plants needed, or 75. If you do not have this much available space, you can create a smaller rain garden or install a rain barrel; Every drop that is captured is a success!

Next, position, outline and dig your garden. The rain garden should have sloped sides about 6-12" deep with a level base. Remove the excavated soil or use it to build a berm on the down slope side to help hold the storm water in the rain garden.

After your garden is excavated, select and plant. Low-maintenance, hardy, local-source native plant species tolerate heavy rain or droughts. Extend seasonal interest with a diverse mixture of sedges, rushes and grasses with flowering species. Create design interest with plants of different heights, shapes and textures.

After planting finish with mulch to maintain soil moisture and help prevent weeds. Water as needed for the first two months of establishment. You now have a working rain garden that is also beautiful and will come back next year.

Will my Rain Garden create a mosquito haven? NO! Mosquitoes need stagnant, shady water for at least 48 hours to breed. Your rain garden will drain within a few hours after each rain. Most mosquito problems are caused by stagnant water in birdbaths and clogged gutters. The birds you attract to your garden will help by eating any mature mosquitoes they find.

Rain Garden & Native Plants

Sunny Songbird Design

70 Square feet ~ 24 Plants

Key Number	Number of Plants	Common Name	Botanical Name	Season of Interest
1	3	Canada Wild Rye	Elymus canadensis	Spring-Fall
2	3	Bee Balm	Monarda fistulosa	Summer
3	3	Cardinal Flower	Lobelia cardinalis	Summer
4	3	Prairie Blazing Star	Liatris pycnostachya	Summer
5	3	Black-Eyed Susan	Rudbeckia hirta	Summer
6	3	Lanceleaf Coreopsis	Coreopsis lanceolata	Late Spring-Summer
7	3	Purple Coneflower	Echinacea purpurea	Summer
8	3	Purple Poppy Mallow	Callirhoe incolucrata	Late Spring-Summer

Butterfly Bungalow Design

70 Square feet ~ 24 Plants

Key Number	Number of Plants	Common Name	Botanical Name	Season of Interest
1	2	Garden Phlox	Phlox paniculata	Spring
2	2	Prairie Blazing Star	Liatris pycnostachya	Summer
3	3	Joe Pye Weed	Eupatorium purpureum	Summer
4	2	Purple Coneflower	Echinacea purpurea	Late Spring-Summer
5	2	Torrey's Rush	Juncus torreyi	Summer-Fall
6	2	Marsh Milkweed	Asclepias incarnata	Summer
7	2	Bottlebrush Sedge	Carex hystericina	Summer-Fall
8	3	Blue Lobelia	Lobelia siphilitica	Summer-Fall
9	2	Aromatic Aster	Aster oblongifolius	Fall
10	2	Cardinal Flower	Lobelia cardinalis	Summer
11	2	Rose Verbena	Glandularia canadensis	Spring-Summer

Cool and Colorful Design

70 Square feet ~ 24 Plants

Key Number	Number of Plants	Common Name	Botanical Name	Season of Interest
1	2	Canada Wild Rye	Elymus canadensis	Summer-Fall
2	2	Garden Phlox	Phlox paniculata	Late Spring-Summer
3	2	Calico Aster	Aster laterifolius	Fall
4	3	Marsh Milkweed	Asclepias incarnata	Summer
5	2	Riddell's Goldenrod	Solidago ridellii	Late Summer-Fall
6	3	Slender Mtn Mint	Pycnanthemum tenuifolium	Summer
7	2	Soft Rush	Juncus effusus	Summer-Fall
8	2	Palm Sedge	Carex muskingumensis	Summer-Fall
9	2	Golden Alexander	Zizia aurea	Summer
10	2	Wild Sweet William	Phlox divaricata	Spring
11	2	Ohio Spiderwort	Tradescantia ohiensis	Spring



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