

What Is a Rain Garden?

A rain garden is simply a garden that captures rainwater allowing it to soak naturally into the soil. By infiltrating rain into the ground, you can reduce problems with runoff and standing water. In addition, the plants and soil in a rain garden can filter and reduce pollutants in runoff, such as nutrients and pesticides from lawn applications, and oils and metals from cars and roads.

A rain garden provides a pleasing answer to runoff problems while attracting beautiful birds, butterflies, insects and other wildlife.

Where These Gardens Grow

Rain gardens can be created in your own yard to address wet problem areas. Landscapers, builders, or volunteers can also create rain gardens to enhance a lawn, park, neighborhood, or even median strips and parking lots.

Designing a Rain Garden

Several factors will influence where and how you create your rain garden, and this guide highlights a few of these concerns. Planting drainage areas with flowers or shrubs may improve the site, but addressing drainage issues may also be necessary.

The Native Plant Society of New Jersey published a detailed *Rain Garden Manual*, which highlights construction details and plant selections. View the manual at www.npsnj.org.

Site Considerations

When choosing a good location for your rain garden consider the topography, the direction where rain flows. You may want to construct a rain garden where stormwater already accumulates. Determine if you can dig down two feet without hitting shallow bedrock or water. Also, identify all utilities before you dig, and maintain a safe distance from your home, approximately 30 feet.

Soil Infiltration

Your garden can be designed to infiltrate stormwater, or to convey water to another drainage area. Evaluate your soil conditions because tight clay soil and shallow bedrock can make it difficult for rain to infiltrate into the ground. To improve infiltration, you can add sand, gravel, and possibly a drainage pipe system, depending on your site conditions.

Excavate the garden lower than the surrounding area, in a concave fashion, to allow rain to flow into the garden bed. The garden should drain within 72 hours after a rainfall to avoid standing water where mosquitoes can breed.



Planting Bed

Replace or amend the excavated soil to obtain a mixture of about half soil, and half a combination of sand and compost. This bed should be about two to three feet deep. Adding a surface layer of mulch will help maintain moisture and weed control.

Plant Selection

Consider choosing *native plants* for your rain garden. Local nurseries can help with your selection of floral plants, sedges, rushes, shrubs, and even some trees. You should select plants based on their preference for wet conditions and tolerance for sun or shady conditions.

Why Use Native Plants?

Native plants grew in this area long before the arrival of Europeans, providing food and shelter for butterflies, insects and other wildlife. These interactions evolved over thousands of years, making native plants uniquely adapted to their environment, to native wildlife, and requiring less care.



Maintaining Rain Gardens

Healthy, dense and diverse plant growth ensures the success of your rain garden. As the plants mature over 1-2 years, your garden will become more effective. Maintain your garden by weeding, pruning, and mulching during the growing seasons, and removing debris during the fall or winter.

Water the rain garden immediately after planting, and during dry spells.

Avoid using pesticides in a rain garden because they can kill or weaken caterpillars, butterflies and other beneficial insects, along with any pests. Pesticides also impair water quality.

What You Can Do

1. Create your own rain garden or include native plants in your existing gardens to help wildlife.
2. View photos from the construction of our rain garden at www.thewatershed.org.
3. Join our FREE River-Friendly Resident Program to learn exciting ways to improve the care of your yard.
4. Become a member of the Watershed Association to enjoy outdoor programs we offer year round, and help us safeguard the watershed lands and waterways.



Additional Website Resources on Rain Gardens

Maplewood Minnesota Rainwater Gardens Site www.ci.maplewood.mn.us/index.asp

Montgomery County, Maryland www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mc/services/dep/rainscapes/home.html

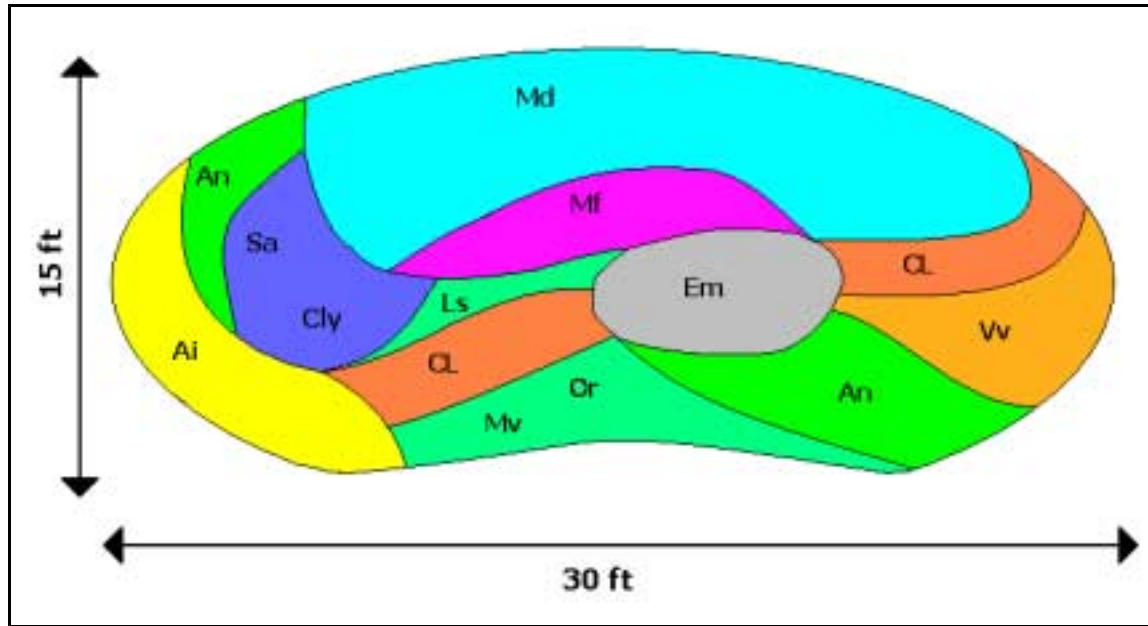
Natural Resources Conservation Service www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/

Rain Gardens: A how-to manual for homeowners <http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/raingarden/rgmanual.pdf>

Rain Gardens of West Michigan www.raingardens.org/index.php

Wisconsin rain gardens www.wnrmag.com/supps/2003/feb03/run.htm

What's In Our Rain Garden?



Stony Brook Rain Garden Plant List					
Perennials	Common Name	Symbol	Ht/Spread	Seasonal Interest	Quantity
<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	Swamp Milkweed	Ai	2-4'/2'	Late Spring-Summer	12
<i>Aster novi-belgii</i>	New York Aster	An	3'/3'	Late Summer-Fall	11
<i>Chelone lyonii</i> "Hot Lips"	Turtlehead	Cly	2-3'/1.5'	Summer-Fall	12
<i>Eupatorium maculatum</i> "Gateway"	Joe-Pye Weed	Em	4-7'/3'	Late Summer-Fall	6
<i>Lilium superbum</i>	Turk's Cap Lily	Ls	4-7'/2'	Late Summer	9
<i>Mertensia virginica</i>	Virginia Bluebells	Mv	1-2'/1'	Spring	24
<i>Monarda didyma</i> "Jacob Cline"	Bee-Balm	Md	2-4'/3'	Summer	24
<i>Monarda fistulosa</i> "Claire Grace"	Wild Bergamot	Mf	2-5'/3'	Late Summer	12
<i>Senecio aureus</i>	Golden Ragwort	Sa	2'/1'	Spring	7
<i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i>	Culver's Root	Vv	4-6'/4'	Late Summer	6
Ferns					
<i>Osmunda regalis</i>	Royal Fern	Or	2-3'/3'	Late Spring-Summer	12
Grasses					
<i>Chasmanthum latifolium</i>	Wild Oats	Cl	4'/3'	All	12

The Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association is a member supported, non-profit organization that is dedicated to preserving water quality and the natural environment in the 265-square-mile area drained by the Stony Brook and Millstone River.

The Watershed Association preserves open space by maintaining an 830-acre nature reserve in Pennington, provides year round environmental education programs for children and adults, and works with towns, businesses, and landowners to improve land use decisions that impact our environment.

The nature reserve offers more than fourteen miles of trails through various habitats including fields, forests, streams and wetlands.

We hope you enjoy the native plants, butterflies and insects growing in our rain garden, and return to witness the seasonal changes.

Our demonstration rain garden was partially funded by the Zelenak family, in memory of their Aunt Louise Stephan. We appreciate their generous support and hope this model will encourage others to plant rain gardens.



31 Titus Mill Rd
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609-737-3735
www.thewatershed.org

Planting a Rain Garden



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