

# A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO RAIN GARDENS



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Rain Gardens are beautiful landscaping features that manage your stormwater runoff. Their plants and soils absorb water runoff from roofs, parking lots, lawns and roads and help to filter out pollutants before they enter the rivers and streams. Rain gardens are an excellent way to boost your native plant populations as well! By planting a rain garden, you can help to protect local freshwaters by reducing and managing stormwater pollution on your property.

## HERE IS A RAIN GARDEN:

Runoff is collected from paved and other surfaces and directed into the garden

Native plants do not require fertilizer and help filter pollutants from the runoff

Native plants provide food and habitat for birds, butterflies, and other pollinators!

A depression in the earth is filled with a mixture of sand, topsoil, compost, and sometimes gravel, that filters runoff

A typical rain garden is between six and nine inches deep



USE A RAIN GARDEN TO TURN THIS ...

... INTO **THIS!**



# THE “INS AND OUTS” OF RAIN GARDENS

## CREATING A FUNCTIONAL DESIGN

1. **Put your rain garden in the right place** — Make sure that the slope of the area will direct water down into the desired location for your rain garden. Choosing an existing low area on your property is a good place to start.
2. **Size the rain garden correctly** — make sure that your rain garden can handle the amount of stormwater flowing into it.
3. **Evaluate existing soils** — soils must be able to filter and drain water easily such as sand, gravel and or regular potting soil. Clay is not good for rain gardens and will require some additional engineering.
4. **Create an attractive design** — select plants that are low-maintenance and native to your region. With a little research, it is possible to create a landscape design that is both beautiful and functional.

## MAINTAINING A BEAUTIFUL RAIN GARDEN

**Water** — daily the first few weeks of planting. Then regularly water until plants are established. Make sure to water in periods of drought.

**Weed** — on a regular basis. Especially the first year. Avoid herbicides as they are detrimental to water quality.

**Mulch** — reduces weeding and watering and helps establish plants.

**Keep salt and other chemicals OUT** — salt destroys soil biology and damages plants. Chemical fertilizer and pesticides are also bad for water quality and are unnecessary when dealing with native plants. Keep these harmful products out of your rain garden.



## USEFUL RESOURCES!

**A guide to building a Rain Garden, complete with garden plans and plant lists for different levels of light and soil types on your property**

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/shorelandzoning/documents/rgmanual.pdf>

**Visit Michigan’s Native Plant Nursery, Ann Arbor MI**

<http://www.nativeplant.com/>

**The United States EPA has many good resources on Rain Gardens and Green Infrastructure**

<https://www.epa.gov/soakuptherain/rain-gardens>