

Fact Sheet

Rain Gardens

Rain gardens are attractive, healthy alternatives to traditional gardens. They help reduce nutrient and sediment run-off into our lakes and streams while providing a beautiful, low-maintenance landscape.

Urbanization has greatly increased the number of impervious surfaces, creating an overload of stormwater runoff in our watersheds. Large quantities of water that previously infiltrated into the ground and collected in small pools now flow quickly, through storm sewer systems, to our lakes and streams. This short-term increase in water flow has exacerbated flooding and erosion problems and has delivered large amounts of sediments, pollutants, and excess nutrients.

What are rain gardens?



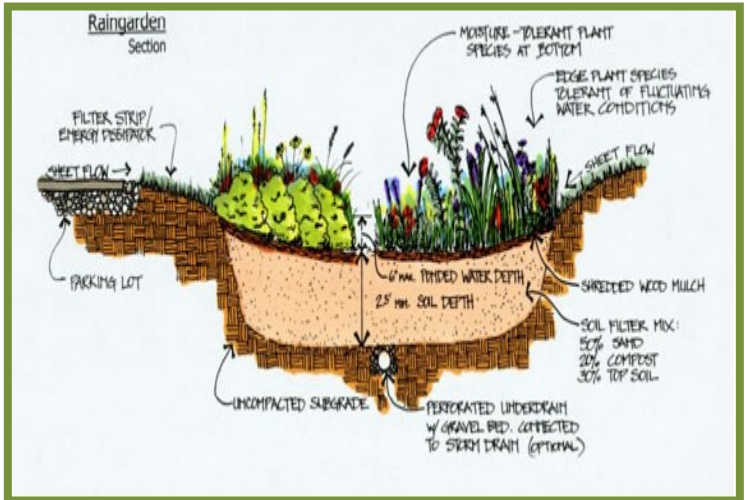
Rain gardens are depressions up to 12 inches deep, planted with a diverse mix of native wildflowers and grasses. These gardens collect rainwater from roofs, driveways and other impervious surfaces. The

water gathers in a shallow pool and slowly filters into the ground over the course of two to three days, rather than flowing into storm sewers.

What are the benefits of rain gardens?

There are many benefits to rain gardens:

- Deep-rooted native plants stabilize soil to prevent erosion during large storm events.
- The deep-rooting nature of native species encourages infiltration of stormwater runoff, which reduces nutrients and sediment from reaching water bodies. Excess nutrients result in green algae-filled waters and reduced run-off flooding problems too.



- Diverse plantings with many native species are adapted to local conditions and are more resistant to drought, flood, insects and disease than low-diversity, non-native plantings.
- A diverse native mix with native wildflowers attracts a variety of wildlife including butterflies, birds and insects.
- Long-term maintenance of a rain garden, consisting of periodic weeding, is much less than for lawns or formalized gardens.
- In the winter, vegetation collects snow and provides interesting texture as well as habitat.



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