



Resources

CCE Rain Garden Guide:
<https://chautauqua.cce.cornell.edu/gardening/rain-gardens>

Audubon - Native Plants for Your Zip Code
www.audubon.org/native-plants

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center – Search New York plants by moisture requirements and sun/shade exposure:
www.wildflower.org/plants/

Who We Are

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**Cornell Cooperative Extension
 Onondaga County**

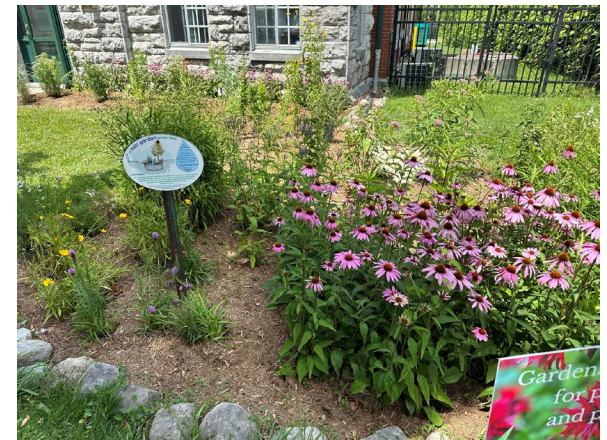
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Rain Gardens:

An Introduction



**A rain garden helps your
 yard ... and your habitat!**



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Native plants and shrubs of the northeastern United States provide the most beneficial habitat for wildlife. They are also very low-maintenance, having evolved over thousands of years to endure the most extreme weather of their native habitat.

Native plants well-suited to rain gardens:

- Swamp milkweed - *Asclepias incarnata*
- Marsh marigold - *Caltha palustris*
- White Turtlehead - *Chelone glabra*
- Common Boneset - *Eupatorium perfoliatum*
- Sweet Joe Pye Weed - *Eutrochium purpureum*
- Common Sneezeweed - *Helenium autumnale*
- Cardinal Flower - *Lobelia cardinalis*
- Great Blue Lobelia - *Lobelia siphilitica*
- Foxglove Beardtongue - *Penstemon digitalis*
- New England Aster - *Symphotrichum novae-angliae*
- Golden Alexander - *Zizia aurea*

Shrubs well-suited to rain gardens:

- Red Chokeberry - *Aronia arbutifolia*
- Buttonbush - *Cephalanthus occidentalis*
- Summersweet - *Clethra alnifolia*
- Winterberry - *Ilex verticillata*
- Silky Dogwood - *Cornus amomum*

What is a rain garden?

Normally much of the rainwater and melted snow that falls does not stay on a property, but runs off into storm drain systems, eventually going into our waterways.

A rain garden can slow and absorb stormwater runoff from roofs and downspouts, driveways, and other hard surfaces. It can be created in a low area of the yard where water pools after a rain, or a depression can be dug out specifically for the rain garden.



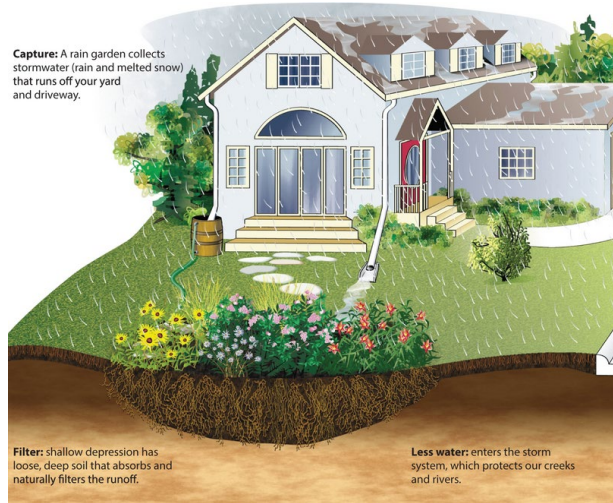
Unchecked rainwater washes salt and harmful chemicals into lakes and streams

Unchecked rainwater:

- Carries pollutants and pet waste bacteria
- Causes erosion
- Causes flooding
- Affects health of fish and wildlife

Rain gardens:

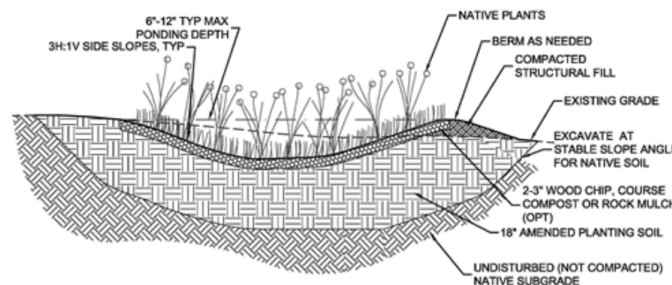
- Channel rainwater back into the ground
- Provide pollen and nectar for insects
- Provide food and habitat for birds and wildlife



How to Create a Rain Garden

Where to put it:

A rain garden should be located on a relatively flat surface that is depressed enough to catch rainwater and runoff. Slightly sloping sites may need a berm on the downhill edge of the garden to slow heavy rain runoff. It should be near a water source (ideally a downspout or rain barrel), but at least 12 feet from a building foundation, well, or septic system, and 45 feet from steeper slopes over 15% (or about nine degrees). The site should get full or partial sunlight.



What size should it be?

Rain gardens can be any size, as long as the area is lower than the surrounding yard to ensure that the water flows into the depressed area to be absorbed. The smaller the garden, however, the less stormwater absorption it will provide. Typical rain gardens are usually anywhere from 100 to 300 square feet.

How deep should it be?

If standing water is still in an area after 24 hours, the soil will need to be dug out and amended with sand or gravel to ensure good drainage. After the amended soil is replaced, a layer of mulch is added for periods of drought. A rain garden is usually from three to eight inches deep.



Other considerations:

A rain garden will not eliminate wet areas; rather, it will redirect the rainwater and make better use of the excess, resulting in about 30% more water soaking into the ground.

Good drainage is crucial in the rain garden. Standing water year-round will create ideal conditions for mosquito breeding and algae growth.