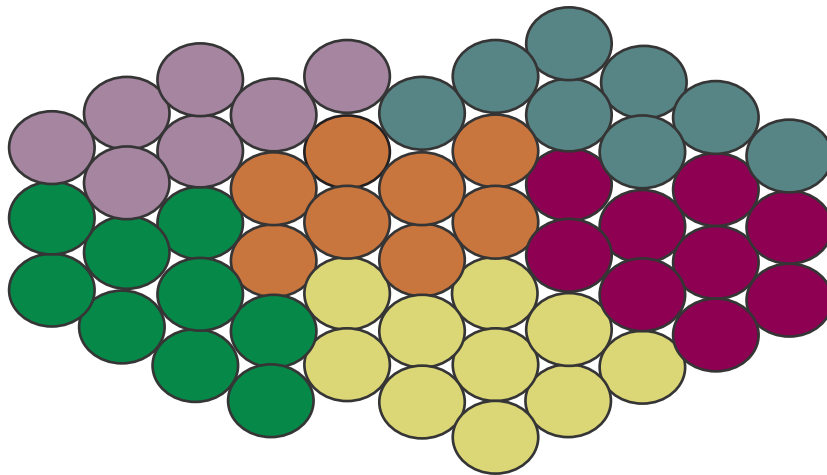




Build Your Own *Rain Garden*

Local Genotypes

Make sure the genotype of the plants/seed you use is proper for your area. A Yellow Coneflower from Texas isn't the same as a Yellow Coneflower from Minnesota, and shouldn't be planted there. It might not do well - or worse, it might do too well and crowd out surrounding species. Avoid this by using genotypes proper for your area. Unfortunately, growers who sell non-local genotypes (knowingly or not) may not even keep collection or source records, so the only dependable strategy is to buy from well-respected growers with established track records.



How do I make a Rain Garden?

It's easy! Just follow these steps:

1. Dig a shallow depression with a level bottom, as large in circumference as you'd like.
2. Direct your downspout or sump pump outlet to your Rain Garden, either by digging a shallow swale (a linear depression designed to channel water) or by routing it through a buried 4" PVC pipe.
3. Plant the native plants recommended in this design sheet.
4. Water your planting every other day for the first few weeks, until plants are growing and well-established.

Once your native Rain Garden plants are established, they'll thrive well without additional water. Fertilizers are not necessary.

 Early Bloomer 1
Ex. Rox sedge
(*Carex vulpinoidea*)

 Mid Bloomer 1
Ex. Wild Nodding Onion
(*Allium cernuum*)

 Late Bloomer 1
Ex. Riddell's Goldenrod
(*Oligoneuron riddellii*)

 Early Bloomer 2
Ex. Golden Alexander
(*Zizia aurea*)

 Mid Bloomer 2
Ex. Mountain Mint
(*Pycnanthemum virginianum*)

 Late Bloomer 2
Ex. Cardinal Flower
(*Lobelia cardinalis*)

What is a Rain Garden?

A Rain Garden is simply a shallow depression in your yard that is planted with native wetland or wet prairie wildflowers and grasses. It is designed to naturally collect water that runs off from your roof or is discharged from your sump pump. Rain Gardens are gaining popularity for three reasons:

1. Rain Gardens make good use of stormwater runoff, conserving precious water supplies and helping protect water quality in downstream lakes and streams.

2. Rain Gardens are planted with beautiful, hardy, low-maintenance native perennial plants.

3. Rain Gardens provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies and beneficial insects, such as mosquito-devouring dragonflies!



Location, Location, Location

Pick a naturally low spot in your yard (at least 10 feet from your house) and direct water from your downspout or sump pump into it. Full sun is best, but make sure the site gets at least a half-day of sunlight.

During heavy rains, your rain garden may fill up and overflow. Make sure this overflow drainage follows the drainage pattern originally design for your lot. Test this by filling your depression with a garden hose and watching the overflow.

If needed, dig a shallow swale to direct overflow water toward the street, road or other downhill areas away from buildings.

Digging In

A depression of two to six inches will suffice. Slope the sides gradually from the edge to the level bottom.

Deeper rain gardens in heavy clay soil will hold water longer. Test this with a garden hose. French drains can be installed to aid infiltration.

More Tips

Hand weed biweekly until native plants are established.

Avoid using lawn fertilizers near the Rain Garden. Fertilizers will stimulate weed competition without benefitting your native plants.

Don't worry about mosquitoes. Most rain gardens will not hold water long enough for mosquitoes to reproduce. Even so, dragonflies, swallows and other natural control processes will keep them in check.

Come spring, mow and remove dead vegetation. Or simply burn it off if your fire department regulations allow it. Native plants thrive under fire management.

Place natural rocks, bird houses, a bench or garden ornaments in and around your Rain Garden - be creative! You'll learn and have fun in designing your own backyard landscape.

Add plenty of native sedges and grasses to physically support taller species and provide a visually textured background that ties the garden together.

Species Selection

A properly functioning Rain Garden should de-water (dry out) within 24-48 hours following a typical rain event. Rain Gardens are often too dry for true wetland species. If soils are light and well-drained, choose from the mesic or even the dry-mesic category. If soils are heavier select from the mesic to wet-mesic category. If you prefer to use true wetland species, adding in a few handfuls of granular clay will add your rain garden in water retention. If you choose to design for intentional water holding, expect overflows to occur and plan for overflow to move away from buildings.

