



# Rain Gardens

---



A “Rain Garden” is a simple, attractive garden designed to catch and infiltrate rainwater that has run-off from roofs, downspouts, sidewalks, driveways, and other hard surfaces. Rain gardens are environmentally beneficial, reducing erosion and removing pollutants, which helps preserve and protect lake and stream water quality. They also provide a beautiful, low maintenance garden planted with hardy, native plants which provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies, dragonflies and other beneficial wildlife.

**Location:** Begin by locating a natural low spot in your yard (at least 10’ away from your home) where downspout or runoff water can be directed. Full sun to part shade is best where plants will receive 4+ hours of direct sunlight. Remember this is not a pond; the water should still drain slowly out of the rain garden through the course of a day. Watch out for utility lines and do not locate your rain garden on top of a septic tank leach field.

**Digging:** Start small and expand later if needed; a rain garden can be any shape and size. A 7’ x 10’ naturally shaped bed, 4-8” deep will be more than sufficient to start. Slope the sides gradually down to a level bottom. Create a small dam on the downhill side of the garden to help hold water. In the case of an overflow make sure the water is draining away from yours and your neighbors’ homes. Before planting, fill the garden with water and wait 24 hours to see if it drains efficiently. If soil is too compacted or heavy (clay) it should be dug up and loosened to an 18” depth then be replaced with a rain garden soil mix of 50-60% sand, 20-30% topsoil and 20-30% compost for better drainage and easy plant establishment. French drains can be installed to aid infiltration too.

**Plant Selection:** Consider using native perennials, grasses and shrubs (and/or related cultivars) because they can establish deep, dense root systems that help break up heavy soils, increase infiltration and can best tolerate the periodic wet and dry conditions of the rain garden. In a 7’ x 10’ bed you will need approximately (35) 1 gallon or 6” potted plants. Select 6-8 of your favorite plants and group 3 or more of the same species together to make an impact. Give them space to mature, planting taller plants in the center or to one side and lower growing plants around them. Some will prefer being planted near the edges to dry-out faster, others will thrive in the center of the garden where they will stay wetter longer.

**Please see our [Rain Garden Plant List](#) on the back of this flyer.**

**Finishing Touches:** Water your plants regularly until they are established (necessary for at least their first growing season). Mulch the garden 2-3” to prevent weed growth and soil erosion. Arrange a “break wall” of decorative rocks near where the water enters the garden to help slow down the water flow and prevent storms from washing out the garden. Observe plants growth and move them to a drier or wetter area in the garden if needed. Fertilizers are not necessary. In spring, remove all dead vegetation to the soil level; shrubs can be trimmed as needed or after flowering. Don’t worry about mosquitoes because your rain garden should not hold water long enough for them to reproduce. However, your rain garden will be attractive to mosquito predators like dragonflies, swallows, and other beneficial wildlife that will keep them in check.

## Rain Garden Plant List-available at Petitti Garden Centers

Plant Name	Soil Moisture	Description
<b>Shrubs</b>		
<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i> -Black Chokeberry	Moist to dry	White flower, black berries, red fall foliage, 3-10'
<i>Cornus sericea</i> -Redtwig Dogwood	Wet to dry	White flower, red bark, variegated foliage, 4-6'
<i>Vaccinium spp.</i> -Blueberry	Moist	Any variety will work well, beautiful fall color, berries in late summer/fall, up to 6' tall
<i>Rhus typhina</i> -Staghorn Sumac	Moist to dry	'Tiger Eyes' is a colorful, compact variety, 3-6'
<i>Salix discolor</i> -Pussy Willow	Moist	Any willow would work, this is the Ohio native, up to 15' tall
<b>Perennials</b>		
<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i> -Butterfly Weed	Moist to dry	Orange to yellow flower, excellent butterfly attractant, 18-36" tall
<i>Aster novi-belgii</i> -New York Aster	Wet to moist	'Alert' is an excellent hot pink, 15" tall
<i>Aster novae-angliae</i> -New England Aster	Moist to dry	'Purple Dome' is a gorgeous purple, bushy, 18"
<i>Chelone glabra</i> -Turtlehead	Average to wet	Pink varieties are very showy, good butterfly attractants and shade tolerant, 30" tall
<i>Coreopsis spp.</i> -Tickseed	Average to dry	Lance-leaf or thread-leaf varieties can both be used, deer resistant, heights vary 6"-30"
<i>Echinacea purpurea</i> -Purple Coneflower	Average to dry	Many varieties available, 'Magnus' is an excellent pink, Perennial Plant of the Year 1998, 30" tall
<i>Eupatorium maculatum</i> -Joe-Pye Weed	Moist to dry	Many attractive varieties, pink blooms, 3-6' tall
<i>Geranium spp.</i> -Cranesbill Geranium	Moist to dry	'Rozanne' is a compact, repeat blooming variety, 2008 Perennial Plant of the Year, grows 18"
<i>Helenium autumnale</i> -Helen's Flower	Moist to dry	Copper-orange to yellow daisies blooming late summer, grow 2-4'
<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i> -False Sunflower	Moist	Zinnia-like, yellow to orange flowers, 3-4' tall
<i>Hemerocallis spp.</i> -Daylily	Moist to dry	Easy to establish, repeat bloomers are recommended like the Stella Series and 'Happy Returns', 12-40"
<i>Liatris spicata</i> -Gayfeather	Wet to moist	White or purple blooms for late summer color, 3'
<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i> -Cardinal Flower	Wet to moist	Deep red foliage & flower, blooms late summer, 3'
<i>Monarda didyma</i> -Bee Balm	Moist to dry	Hardy mint relative, many beautiful varieties, 1-4'
<i>Physostegia virginiana</i> -Obedient Plant	Moist to dry	Blooms white or pink, good cut flower, 1-4' tall
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i> -Black-Eyed Susan	Moist to dry	Many different varieties to choose from, 1-4' tall
<i>Solidago speciosa</i> -Goldenrod	Moist to dry	Excellent native plant for late season yellow color
<i>Tradescantia virginiana</i> -Spiderwort	Moist to dry	'Sweet Kate' is very attractive with a deep violet flowers and chartreuse yellow foliage, 24"
<b>Grasses</b>		
<i>Acorus calamus</i> -Sweet Flag	Wet to moist	Small, tufted marsh grass, easy to grow, 'Ogon' is a striking yellow variegated variety, 12" tall
<i>Carex spp.</i> -Sedge	Moist to dry	Many varieties to choose from, most are shade tolerant, variegated, colorful, growing 12-18"
<i>Juncus spp.</i> -Rush	Wet to average	Spiral, curly and straight forms, clumping, 10"-2'
<i>Panicum virgatum</i> -Switch Grass	Moist to dry	Native, upright grass, with colorful foliage and excellent winter interest, panicles bloom late summer red and purple, grows 3-5' tall