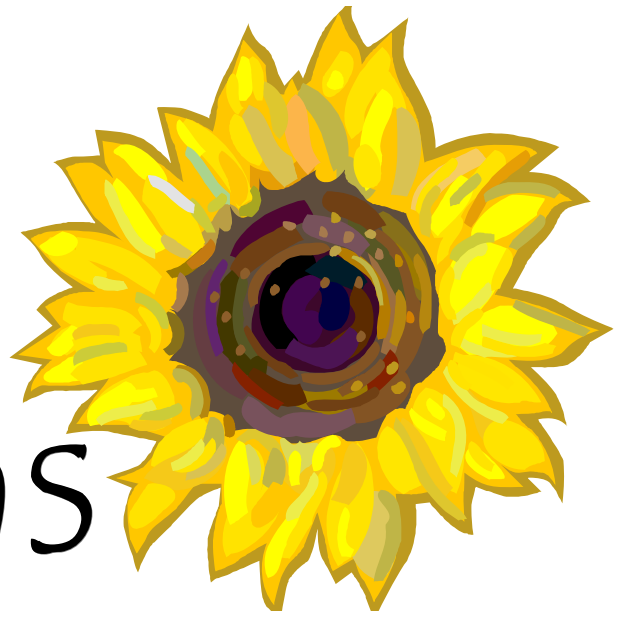


Rain Gardens



A household way
to improve
water quality in
your community

Rain Gardens help to:

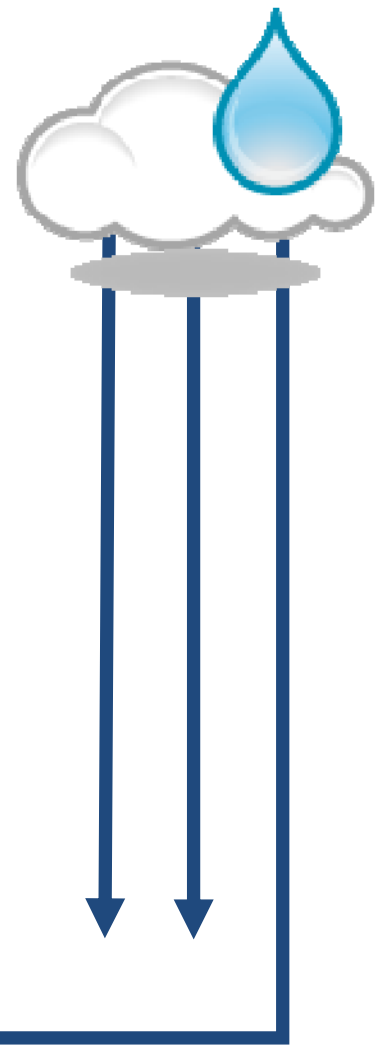
- Prevent flooding, sewer back-ups, and erosion
 - Recharge groundwater
 - Add beauty and wildlife habitat
- Keep chemicals and toxins out of lakes and streams
- Reduce the need for costly municipal stormwater management

LEARN HOW



What is a Rain Garden?

A Rain Garden is an area of landscape planted with wildflowers and other native plants to replace areas of turf lawn. When it rains or when snow melts in the spring, the gardens fill with a few inches of water and allow it to filter into the ground rather than running off into storm drains. Compared to a conventional lawn, rain gardens allow about 30 percent more water to soak into the ground! This water would otherwise carry pollutants such as fertilizers and pesticides down storm drains to the nearest lake or stream. As an added benefit, the extra water soaking into the ground recharges groundwater and helps prevent flooding while adding natural beauty!



The Typical Rain Garden

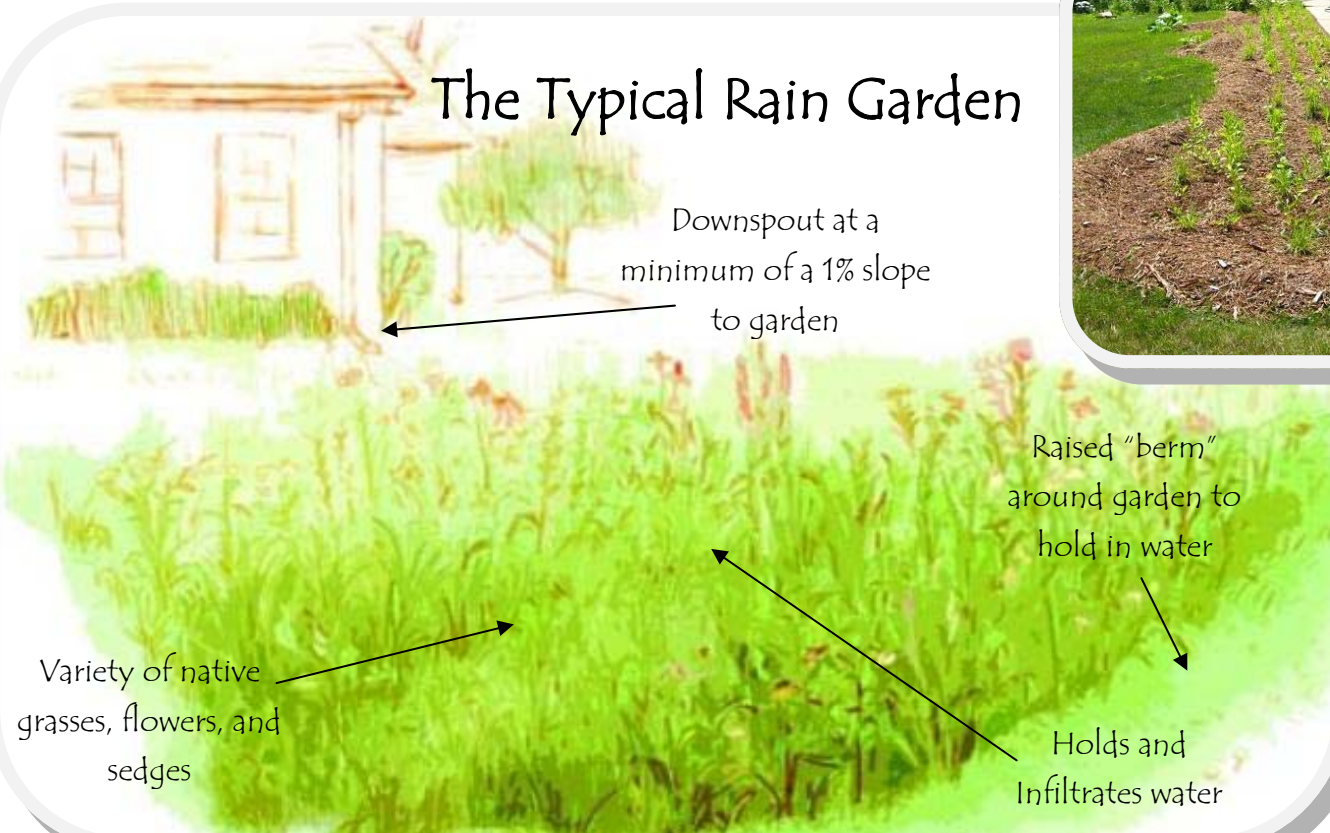
Downspout at a minimum of a 1% slope to garden



Raised "berm" around garden to hold in water

Variety of native grasses, flowers, and sedges

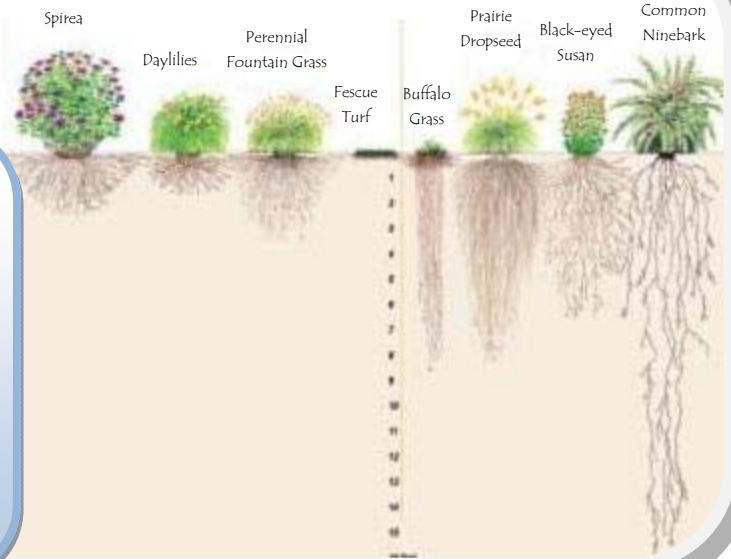
Holds and Infiltrates water





Why use native plants?

Native plants have deeper root systems than non-native plants, which can automatically increase the ability of soil to absorb and retain water. More water going into the ground means less water running off the landscape to potentially pollute our lakes and rivers.



Purple Cone Flower



Little Bluestem



Columbine



Prairie Smoke

Building the Rain Garden

1. Excavation

Once a site is selected, the garden is dug to a depth of around 3 to 4 inches with the bottom being flat

2. Planting

Planting one plant per square foot goes quickly with help from a few friends

3. Growth

Once a garden has matured, weeds will have a hard time growing and birds and butterflies will frequently visit



Rain Garden Tips

- As a rain garden matures, make sure to thin out populations of some plants to allow others to establish themselves
- Leave dead or dormant plants standing over winter. They provide food and shelter for birds. In spring, cut back to allow new shoots to appear
- Installation of a rain garden is slightly more than that of an area of comparable lawn but maintenance is low once plants mature



Like These Photos?

Submit your own!

The University of Wisconsin—Extension has a Rain Garden web page! There you will find the steps for building a garden and several photo galleries with pictures of Rain Gardens of all shapes and sizes!

<http://fyi.uwex.edu/sewraingardens/>

This fact sheet is based on the University of Wisconsin—Extension's publication GWQ034. To view a PDF version or order a hard copy of this publication or of "Rain Gardens: A how-to manual for homeowners" (GWQ037) visit <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/>

Illustrations by Rob Dunlavey

Photos by Root-Pike WIN and UW-Extension

Layout design/production by John Loy, and editorial assistance by Andy Yench, University of Wisconsin – Extension

For more information about Rain Gardens contact:

Andy Yench, Natural Resources Educator

9501 Watertown Plank Road

Wauwatosa, WI 53226 , 414-256-4631

