

RAIN GARDENS TO LESSEN THE IMPACT OF STORMWATER RUNOFF

There is no denying that humans alter the landscape, leading to more stormwater runoff. Stormwater picks up pollutants carrying them to local streams and rivers. Increased stormwater increases the risk of flooding, decreases infiltration and groundwater recharge and increases the cost of water treatment. Property owners can make small changes to help curb the growing stormwater problem and improve water quality.

- Rain gardens are bowl-shaped gardens designed to capture water, allowing it to soak into the ground. They can drain water from roof downspouts, driveways, walkways or other impervious surfaces. They slow and reduce the amount of runoff from your property, while adding a lovely garden feature that reaps the following benefits: flood reduction, pollutant removal, groundwater protection, enhanced wildlife habitat and improved aesthetics.
- A rain garden must be designed and installed with careful consideration or you may create more problems. First look at the topography, take a walk in the rain and study water flow on your property. Choose a location that gets runoff from a roof downspout or other impervious surface and ask your municipality for specific ordinances.
- Know your soil type. Avoid areas with soils that are permanently or periodically waterlogged. Once constructed, ponding depth should be less than 12 inches; 4-8 inches is best.
- How do you determine the size of your rain garden? It's important to place your garden where it will collect as much runoff as possible.
- To learn more about creating and managing a rain garden to control stormwater on your property, go to <https://extension.psu.edu/rain-gardens>. By making changes upstream, we can all play a part in improving water quality. <https://extension.psu.edu/rain-gardens-the-basics>
- Choose native plants suitable to the area based on soil, sunlight and location in the garden. The plants must be able to tolerate variable moisture conditions. Select plants with a variety of shape, color, height and bloom time to maximize the benefits for wildlife, including pollinators. Also consider choosing a plant with some evergreen leaves to prevent soil erosion in winter months. Check out <https://extension.psu.edu/rain-gardens-the-plants>

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