



How to Build Your Own Rain Garden

Rain gardens are a beautiful way to protect water quality while adding curb appeal to your home. Rain gardens are depressions in landscaping designed to capture runoff from a roof, driveway, or yard and allow it to efficiently penetrate the soil. This process stops pollutants from entering nearby waterways. Plantings such as shrubs, ornamental grasses, and flowering perennials create an attractive landscape, improve your local environment, and provide habitat for birds and pollinators. You can easily create your own by following these steps.

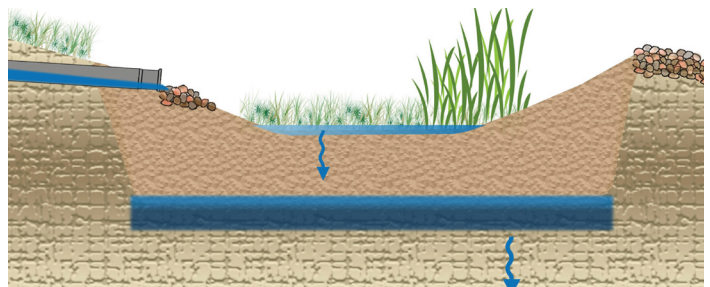


1. Pick a Location

Rain gardens should be downslope from hard, impervious surfaces or gutter drain spouts. Pick a spot that is mostly flat or slightly sloped and not somewhere that is low-lying or naturally wet. Your garden should be at least:

- 10 feet away from a home's foundation
- 15 feet away from a septic tank
- 25 feet away from buried utilities (drinking water wells, water or sewer lines, electricity, natural gas)

If you don't know what's underground, call 1-888-DIG-SAFE before you start.



2. Determine Size and Depth

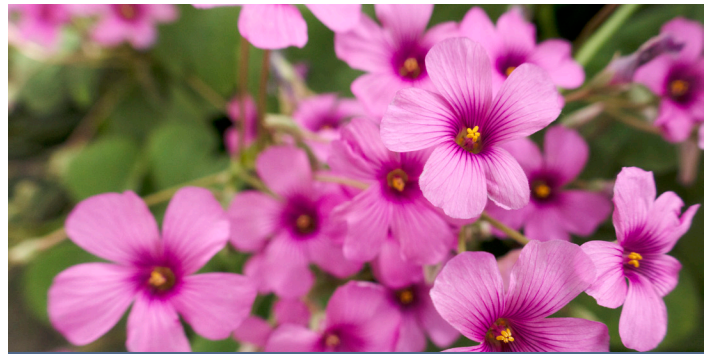
A rain garden should be sized according to the drainage area it is serving. Attempt to size the garden to hold water from a 1-inch rainstorm. A good rule of thumb is to make the rain garden 30 percent the size of the impervious surface. In other words, runoff from a 1,000-square-foot rooftop would require a 300-square-foot garden. Garden depth should be approximately 4 to 8 inches below grade.



3. Design Time

Once you know the best location and size for your rain garden, it is time to decide on a general shape. The garden can be circular, kidney-shaped, or rectangular, keeping in mind that the center of the garden should be at least 6 inches below grade. You may also consider:

- Creating a channel to direct runoff into the rain garden
- Extending downspouts or creating a French drain to carry rain from gutters to the garden
- Creating a berm downhill to help keep water in the garden



4. Picking Plants

Native plants are recommended for rain gardens as they will thrive well in your region. Consider the following when picking plants:

- Zone hardiness
- Sunlight needs
- Moisture needs
- Soil type in your garden
- Size when full mature

This is your opportunity to be creative while keeping in mind the plant's needs. If you are unsure what plants would suit your rain garden best, consult your local nursery. Opting for seedlings or smaller plants is also a cost-effective approach.



5. Create Your Garden

Delineate your garden with and start digging from the center outward to avoid packing down the soil as you work. Even though the rain garden will only be 4 to 8 inches below grade, you will want to loosen up the soil at least 2 feet deep to help plants establish their root system. Once you excavate the area, you may want to amend the soil with a mixture of sand, compost, or topsoil to increase permeability. Now you are ready to lay out your plants and get them in the ground.



6. Mulch and Maintain

To help discourage weeds and retain moisture, lay sheets of newspaper around the plants and spread approximately 3 inches of mulch on top. Plan on mulching the garden each spring until the plants are fully matured. Regularly weed to ensure the nutrients in the soil and water are directed to your plants. Check your garden during and after rainstorms, and make adjustments to the contour or strategically place rocks to help the flow of runoff. During dry weather, you may need to water the rain garden once a week.

