

# Select the Right Plants for Your Rain Garden



The success of your rain garden depends on selecting the right types of plants. Observe your rain garden site and record pertinent information such as hours of sun, reflections off adjacent buildings and excessive wind. These conditions may contribute to unusual 'microclimates' due to increased heat or exposure and it is necessary to choose plants accordingly.

Plant your rain garden with plants that will thrive in that environment. Whether in the sun or shade, rain gardens can be planted with shrubs and flowers that are beautiful and low maintenance – as long as you select the plants that love those conditions. Native plants – or plants that are indigenous to this climate or region – can thrive without a lot of care, extra water, or extra fertilizer.



Mission: "The Watershed Alliance of York (WAY) is a coalition of stakeholders committed to being innovative leaders encouraging watershed-based planning, restoration and protection, through locally led conservation, education and stewardship initiatives, in York County and beyond."

Watershed Alliance of York, Inc.

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Watershed Alliance of York, Inc.

BE WATER WISE—  
RAIN GARDEN AT  
HOME

*Encouraging watershed planning,  
restoration and protection, in York  
County and beyond*



[www.watershedsyork.org](http://www.watershedsyork.org)

## Why are rain gardens important?

Two of the most important environmental issues are *water quality* and *stormwater control*. Rain Gardens enhance local water quality by allowing water to be naturally filtered by soil instead of being piped, untreated into large bodies of water. A simple, yet effective method to enhance water quality and control stormwater is through the use of rain gardens.

Beyond its environmental use, rain gardens provide attractive landscaping and a natural habitat for birds and butterflies, while encouraging environmental stewardship and community pride. In addition, using native plant species in your rain garden will be an excellent way to increase native populations in a developed area.



The perimeter of a rain garden is defined with string before digging.



On a gentle slope, soil from digging out the garden can be used to create the berm. This rain garden is 4 inches deep.

## How is a “rain garden” different from any other garden?

To a certain extent, a regular flower garden, or even a vegetable garden, functions like a rain garden. But, for a garden to be a *rain* garden – i.e. to capture and infiltrate precipitation into the groundwater – it must be dug down or planted slightly below-grade to catch the runoff in a shallow basin. Ideally, a rain garden is also planted with a variety of native grasses, forbs and other herbaceous or woody plants that are adapted to the soil, precipitation, climate and other site conditions. These native plants have deeper root systems that facilitate the efficient recharge of our aquifers and also sustain the plants through the draughts that sometimes occur in our PA summers.

## How do you build a rain garden?

The design of a rain garden involves, among other things, the hydrologic cycle, non-point pollutant treatment, resource conservation, habitat creation, nutrient cycles, soil chemistry, horticulture, landscape architecture, and ecology. Sound complicated? Don't worry, it isn't!

- Select rain garden location
- Dig shallow depression and place soil around edges to build up a berm
- Plant and enjoy all year round!



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