



Rain Gardens

What is a rain garden?

Rain gardens are specially designed to collect stormwater runoff from hardened surfaces like empty fields, driveways, patios or roofs after a rain event, and help slow, store and soak up the stormwater. Runoff from rainfall or snowmelt can pick up surface contaminants like fertilizers, pesticides and animal waste and wash it into our waterways.

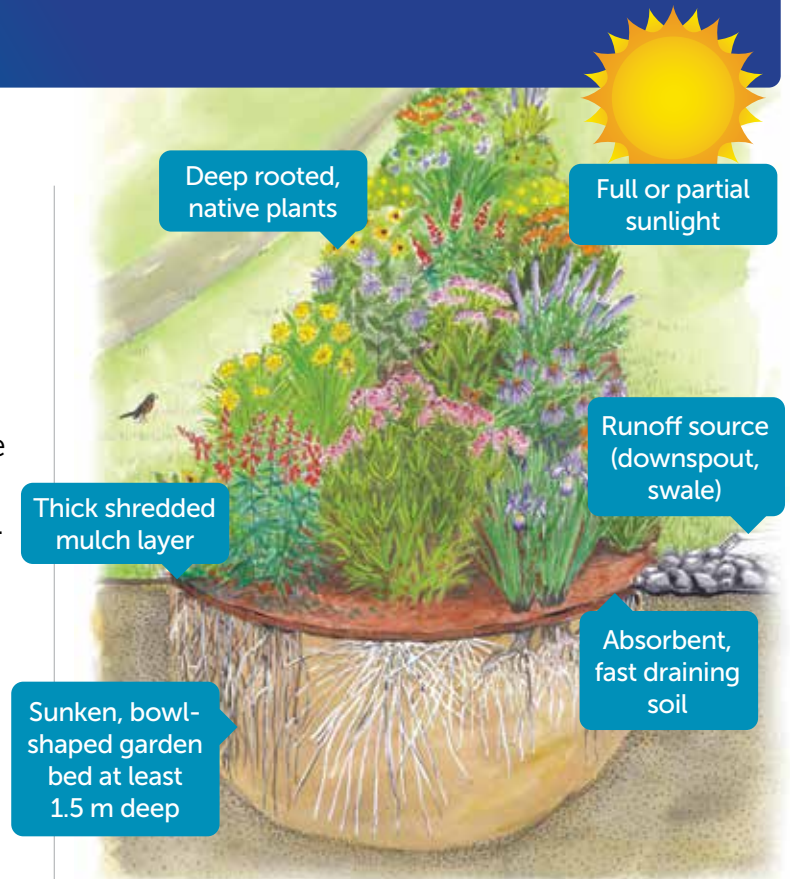
Rain gardens offer a simple, affordable and beautiful option for sustainable drainage on your property. If installed correctly, they can capture stormwater from a large rain event, allowing it to be slowly absorbed by the plants and soil or evaporated into the surrounding environment.

Rain gardens can also support pollinators and wildlife by providing food sources and habitat.

Building your own rain garden

WHERE: Near a downspout, swale, farm building, or other impermeable drainage area where there is a source of stormwater runoff. You can use an existing low-lying area or dig a new garden.

HOW: Rain gardens begin with a deep, bowl-shaped depression under the garden, at least 1.5 m deep. Excavate existing soil and replace with a light, absorbent soil mix so that the garden sits slightly below grade. Plant with deep-rooted native plants. Design to fully drain with 48 hours of a storm event.



Deep rooted,
native plants

Full or partial
sunlight

Runoff source
(downspout,
swale)

Thick shredded
mulch layer

Sunken, bowl-
shaped garden
bed at least
1.5 m deep

Absorbent,
fast draining
soil

Rain gardens **SLOW** the flow of runoff, **STORE** excess water between storm events, and help it **SOAK** into the soil for filtration.

If the stormwater exceeds the capacity of the garden, install an overflow outlet. See resources below on how to design your rain garden, or contact a sustainable drainage landscape professionals in your area.

MAINTENANCE: During the first year, ensure adequate watering between storm events so your native species can become established and form deep roots. Once plants have established, occasionally weed and water your garden to maintain function and aesthetics. If you have a rain barrel, you can direct your overflow hose into the rain garden as well.

What to plant in your rain garden

A rain garden can include many types of vegetation, but deep-rooted native shrubs, perennials and grasses are low-maintenance and tolerant of both wet and drought conditions, making them an ideal choice for a rain garden. When selecting native plants for a rain garden, be sure to consider the amount of sunshine your garden receives, the bloom period of the flowers (try and have a variety for pollinators!), and the expected size of the garden, considering plants may not reach full size for multiple years. Check the Ontario Native Plant nursery onplants.ca or your local native plant nursery for a variety of native plants for your rain garden!



Black Eyed Susan



Purple Coneflower



Wild Bergamot



Red Osier Dogwood



Common Ninebark



Butterfly Weed



Blue Flag Iris



Joe Pye Weed



Little Bluestem



Prairie Dropseed

Other tips:

- Place small river rock on a 2:1 slope along the sides of your garden to prevent scouring or erosion
- Ensure your soil has adequate drainage, or consider importing more absorbent, light soil
- Apply shredded hardwood mulch (rather than bark or softwood mulch, which will float) to exposed soil to prevent erosion and weeds

Follow recommended design guidelines to protect foundations, septic systems and wellheads.

Consult a professional for site-specific concerns. **Call before you dig:** www.on1call.com.



More resources

Follow the QR code to find more sustainable drainage resources and ideas for your property.



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