

How Do I Create a Rain Garden?

(provided by www.greenscapes.org)

Follow these seven easy steps to make your very own rain garden. More detailed instructions and plans can be found at www.raingardens.org or www.raingardennetwork.com.

- 1) Choose a location. Pick a site for your garden that tends to collect water or where runoff from your driveway or downspout can be diverted into it. Your rain garden should be at least 10 feet away from building foundations, underground utilities, and septic system drainfields. Keep a 1-2 foot grass buffer between any downspouts and your garden to prevent washout.

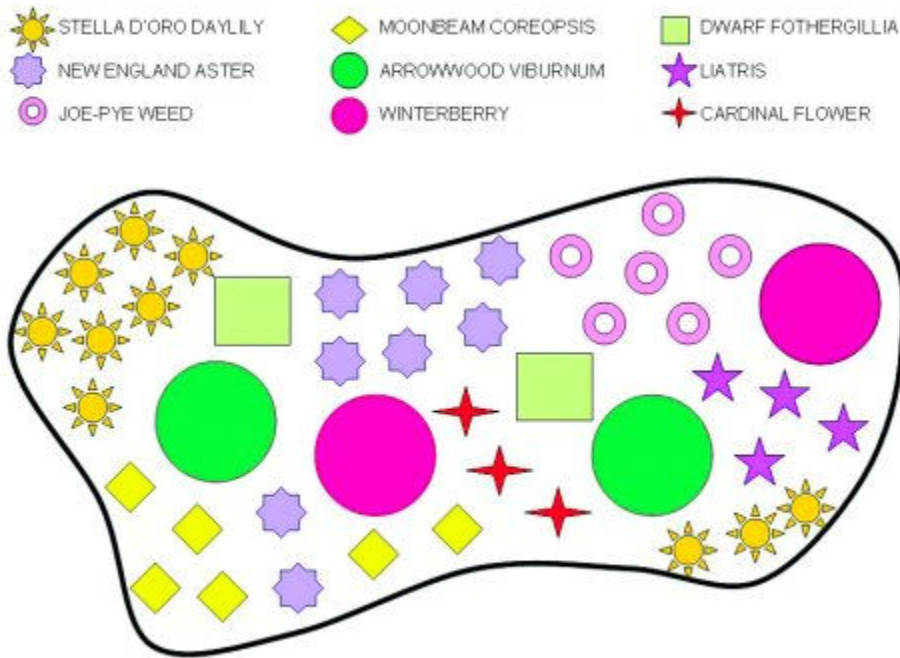
- 2) Measure your garden. Your rain garden should be 20-30% of the drainage area it is treating. So, if you are treating runoff from your 1000 ft² driveway, you want a 200-300 square foot garden. Rain gardens are versatile – they can be any shape you want, from a regular rectangle to an amorphous blob. It should be graded slightly so water flows towards the center, about six inches lower in the center than the edges.

- 3) Check the drainage. It is important that your rain garden drains quickly. Determine if water can infiltrate fast enough by digging a hole approximately 8 inches deep and pouring in a few inches of water. If the water drains slower than an inch an hour, you will need to add a layer of gravel to the bottom of your rain garden (at least 6 inches).

- 4) Prepare your soil. Soils on the South Shore tend to be sandy, which is good because most can simply be improved by loosening them and mixing them with some compost. The ideal soil is a mix of two parts sand, one part topsoil (no clay), and one part compost. Loosen the soil to a depth of 2 feet.

- 5) Choose your plants. Select a variety of native, low-maintenance flowers and grasses that will provide color and interest throughout the seasons and can tolerate both wet and dry conditions (remember the rain garden will fill with rainwater periodically). Consider light and water preferences of the plants

– some will thrive in sun, others shade; some prefer the drier edges of the garden, others may thrive in the soggy center. Group the plants together for the most impact, and estimate one small plant per square foot. Use our suggested rain garden plan (see below) or search the web for more ideas.



6) Plant your garden. This is the fun part! You may want to create a grid of string if you are following a gridded plan. Remove each plant from its pot, break up the root ball slightly, and gently press it into its designated location. Be careful not to walk on the prepared soil or you will compact it. Once all your plants are in their new home, give your garden a good drink of water.

7) Add mulch. A 2-3 inch layer of shredded hardwood mulch is necessary to keep the soil moist and ready to soak up rain, and it helps reduce weeds. Chipped bark mulch tends to float when flooded.