



# Rain Gardens

*Building  
sustainable  
quality of  
life...*

Rain gardens mimic the natural groundwater filtration processes that took place before the home was constructed. These gardens increase infiltration, decrease run-off, purifies wastewater, and reduces the risk of flash flooding. Plus they can help the aesthetics of your yard.

Constructing your own rain garden can be a fun weekend project that will last for decades, assuming a minimal amount of maintenance.

**Step 1: Decide its location**—Generally rain gardens are located near down spouts to collect and filter run-off. Be careful to give the garden enough sunlight and to keep it far enough from the home that you don't create water problems.

**Step 2: Design the garden**—Kidney or teardrop shapes seem to work the best. Also, the garden should only be 4-8 inches deep. Otherwise it will pond water and look like a hole in the ground.

The type of soil plays a large role. Much of northeast Wisconsin is clay soil. You may want to replace the clay with sandier soils. Otherwise a larger garden will be needed to infiltrate properly. If your soil is already sandy, such as near bodies of water, your garden should be fine as is.

**Step 3: Build the garden**—Simply level out the area you've chosen for your garden and make a berm around the downhill edges and you have the basic rain garden. Different techniques can be used depending on your landscape (such as a ditch-like garden).



**Step 4: Plant**—Select regional plants that have a well established root system. For a list of regional plant recommendations, visit: <http://dnr.wi.gov/runoff/rg/plants/PlantListing.htm>

The Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources offers rain garden details: <http://dnr.wi.gov/runoff/rg/>

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