Sample Rain Garden Plants

Swamp Milkweed
Asclepias incarnata

Marsh blazing star
Liatris spicata

White Turkehead
Chelone glabra

Wild Geranium
Geranium maculatum

Oval Sedge
Carex beckonii

Brown Fox Sedge
Carex vepinnacea

Golden Alexanders
Zizia aurea

Great Blue Lobelia
Lobelia spicata

Whorled Milkweed
Asclepias verticillata

Jack-in-the-Pulpit
Arisaema triphyllum

Queen of the Prairie
Filipendula rubra

Eastern Star Sedge
Carex radiata

Prairie Blazing Star
Liatris pycnostachya

Foxylove
Penstemon digitalis

Zigzag Goldenrod
Solidago flexicaulis

Bee Balm
Monarda fistulosa

Purple Coneflower
Echinacea purpurea

Penn Sedge
Carex pensylvanica

Showy Black-Eyed Susan
Rudbeckia fulgida var. speciosa

Prairie Dropseed
Sporobolus heterolepis

Wild Columbine
Aquilegia canadensis

Woodland Phlox
Phlox divaricata

False Solomon’s Seal
Maianthemum racemosum

Blue Flag Iris
Iris virginica

shrevei

Conservation@Home

Learn how to use native plants to solve water problems on your property!

Adapted from design courtesy of Applied Ecological Services, Inc.

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What is a rain garden? A rain garden is simply a shallow depression in your yard that's planted with native wildflowers and grasses that are able to thrive in changing soil moisture. Its purpose is to gather, filter and infiltration rainwater into the ground (recharging the aquifer), provide habitat for wildlife, and deliver enjoyment to its owner (that's you)!

Rain gardens are gaining popularity for 3 reasons:

1. Rain gardens make good use of the rainwater, the native plants filter and clean water as it soaks into the ground.
2. Rain gardens are planted with beautiful, hardy, low-maintenance native perennial plants and native shrubs.
3. Rain gardens provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies and beneficial insects, such as mosquito-deterrenting dragonflies!

Simple Construction

1. Dig a shallow depression with a level bottom. The size depends on your drainage needs. A good guideline is 20% of the square feet of your drain area for sandy soil, 50% for loam, and 40-50% for clay.
2. Pick a naturally low spot in your yard at least 6" deep. Full sun is best. To choose a spot with at least half-day sunlight, do not put the rain garden in an area of a soggy field.
3. A depression of about 2-4 inches is fine. Slope the sides gradually from the edge to the level bottom. For heavy clay soils, dig the rain garden deeper or use topsoil and compost to improve drainage.
4. Direct your downspout or swamp outlet to your rain garden, either by digging a shallow v-shaped area - or by routing it through a buried 4" pipe. Always plan that the overflow location is lower than where the water enter.
5. Plant your rain garden with native plants appropriate for your soil type and sub-division conditions.
6. If it doesn't rain, keep the soil moist but not wet for the first growing season until plants are well-established.

Once your rain garden plants are established, standard garden maintenance is all that is required.

Too much of a good thing

During heavy rain, your garden may overflow. Make sure the overflow follows the drainage pattern originally designed for your lot. Test this by filling your depression with a garden hose and watching the overflow. If needed, dig a shallow swale to direct overflow toward the street or other down-slope areas away from buildings. It should not drain to your neighbors property.

True Natives vs. Cultivars

We recommend using true natives which are adapted to survive under our local conditions (rainfall, drought, and temperature fluctuations) and support wildlife who are dependent on plants for their food and development. Cultivars have been artificially cloned or bred for specific characteristics such as flower color and may not function as well as the true native. The name of the plant gives a clue if it is a pure native; if the botanical name is followed by a common name in single quotation marks, then it is a cultivar (e.g. Echinacea purpurea ‘White Swan’). Purchasing from well-respected growers/shippers is a dependable strategy for getting the right plants.

More Tips

- Weed biweekly until native plants are established.
- Avoid using lawn fertilizers near the rain garden. They stimulate weeds without benefiting plants.
- Don't worry about mosquitoes. A properly constructed rain garden will not hold water long enough for mosquitoes to reproduce and it attracts dragonflies, butterflies, and other controls to keep them in check.
- Place natural rocks, bird houses, a bench or garden ornaments in and around your rain garden. Have fun with it!
- Include native sedges and grasses to help physically support taller species.

The Conservation Foundation

is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving open space and natural lands, protecting rivers and waterways, and promoting stewardship of the environment in Northeast Ohio. Established in 1972, we work closely with citizens, elected officials, developers, land-use planners, park districts, and forest preserves. We have helped protect more than 30,000 acres of open space.

The Conservation Foundation has more than 6,000 donors and members, and 500 volunteers.

Our main office is at the McDonald Farm in Nappanoe, IL, another at DeKoven-Muir Farm in Montgomery, IL. For more information, visit www.thecconservationfoundation.org

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**Zone A Plants (wet/moist)**

- Swamp Milkweed
- Great Blue Lobelia
- Marsh Blazing Star
- White Tasselhead
- Blue Flag Iris
- Golden Alexanders

**Sedges (Zone A)**

- Brown Fox Sedge
- Palm Sedge

**Zone B Plants (drier)**

- Woaded Milkweed
- Fawnlone Beardtongue
- Zigzag Goldenrod
- Bee Balm
- Shov Black-Eyed Susan
- Purple Coneflower

**Sedges (Zone B)**

- Bigobti Sedge
- Eastern Star Sedge
- Prairie Crooked

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**Zone A Plants (wet/moist)**

- Great Blue Lobelia
- Wild Columbine
- Woodland Phlox
- Wild Ginger
- Shooting Star
- Jack-in-the-Pulpit

**Sedges (Zone A)**

- Penn Sedge
- Palm Sedge

**Moist Shaded Areas**

- Greenbriar
- Pink Sedge
- Carex pedunculata

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**Zone A Plants (wet/moist)**

- Swamp Milkweed
- Great Blue Lobelia
- Marsh Blazing Star
- White Tasselhead
- Blue Flag Iris
- Golden Alexanders

**Sedges (Zone A)**

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- Palm Sedge

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- Woaded Milkweed
- Fawnlone Beardtongue
- Zigzag Goldenrod
- Bee Balm
- Shov Black-Eyed Susan
- Purple Coneflower

**Sedges (Zone B)**

- Bigobti Sedge
- Eastern Star Sedge
- Prairie Crooked
**Rain Garden Design**

**What is a rain garden?**

A rain garden is simply a shallow depression in your yard that’s planted with native wildflowers and grasses that are able to thrive in changing soil moisture. Its purpose is to gather, filter and infiltrate rainwater into the ground (restoring the aquifer), provide habitat for wildlife, and deliver enjoyment to its owner (that’s you!)

Rain gardens are gaining popularity for 3 reasons:

1. Rain gardens make good use of the rainwater, the native plants filter and clean water as it soaks into the ground. By keeping runoff out of storm drains, rain gardens also help protect water quality in local lakes and streams and restore the aquifer, our underground water supply.
2. Rain gardens are planted with beautiful, hardy, low-maintenance native perennial plants and native shrubs.
3. Rain gardens provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies and beneficial insects, such as mosquito-devouring dragonflies!

**Simple Construction**

It’s easy! Just follow these easy steps:

1. Dig a shallow depression with a level bottom. The size depends on your drainage needs. A good estimate is 20% of the square feet of your drain area for sandy soil, 50% for loam, and 60-70% for clay.
2. Pick a naturally low spot in your yard at least 10ft from your house. Full sun is best. Try to choose a spot with at least half-day sunlight. Do not put the rain garden in the area of a septic field.
3. A depression of about 2-4 inches is fine. Slope the sides gradually from the edge to the level bottom. For heavy clay soils, dig the rain garden deeper or mix topsoil with compost to improve drainage.
4. Direct your downspout or curb cut outlet to your rain garden either by digging a shallow sloped or by routing it through a buried 4" pipe. Always plan that the overflow location is lower than where the water enters.
5. Plant your rain garden with native plants appropriate for your soil type and sub-zone conditions.
6. If it doesn’t rain, keep the soil moist but not wet for the first growing season until plants are well-established.

Once your rain garden plants are established, standard garden maintenance is all that is required.

**Too much of a good thing**

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**True Natives vs. Cultivars**

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**More Tips**

- Avoid using lawn fertilizers near the rain garden. They stimulate weeds without benefiting plants.
- Don’t worry about mosquitoes. A properly constructed rain garden will not hold water long enough for mosquitoes to reproduce and it attracts dragonflies, swallows, and other controls to keep them in check.
- Place natural rocks, bird houses, a bench or garden ornaments in and around your rain garden. Have fun with it!
- Include native sedges and grasses to help physically support taller species.

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**Zone B Plants (drier)**

- Wrold Milkweed
- Fagaline Beardtongue
- Zizia Goldenrod
- Bee Balm
- Shoo Fly Black-Eyed Susan
- Purple Coreopsis
- Prairie blazing Star

**Sedges (Zone B)**

- Bigelow’s Sedge
- Eastern Star Sedge
- Prairie Sedge

**Zone A Plants (wet/moist)**

- Swamp Milkweed
- Great Blue Lobelia
- Marsh Blazing Star
- White Turtleshead
- Blue Flag Iris
- Golden Alexanders

**Sedges (Zone A)**

- Brown Fox Sedge
- Palm Sedge

**Moist Shaded Areas**

- Great Blue Lobelia
- Wild Columbine
- Woodland Phlox
- Wild Ginger
- Shooting Star
- Jack-in-the-Pulpit
- Wild Geranium

**Sedges**

- Penn Sedge
- Palm Sedge
- Plantain-Leaved Sedge
Sample Rain Garden Plants

Swamp Milkweed
Asclepias incarnata

Marsh Blazing Star
Liatris spicata

White Turfhead
Chloane glabra

Wild Geranium
Geranium maculatum

Oval Sedge
Carex tricolii

Brown Fox Sedge
Carex vupinodes

Golden Alexanders
Zizia aurea

Great Blue Lobelia
Lobelia spicata

Watercress Milkweed
Asclepias verticillata

Jack-in-the-Pulpit
Arisaema triphyllum

Queen of the Prairie
Filipendula rubra

Eastern Star Sedge
Carex radiata

Prairie Blazing Star
Liatris pycnostachya

Foxglove Beardtongue
Penstemon digitalis

Zigzag Goldenrod
Solidago flexicaulis

Bee Balm
Monarda fistulosa

Purple Coneflower
Echinacea purpurea

Penn Sedge
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Sporobolus heterolepis

Wild Columbine
Aquilegia canadensis

Woodland Phlox
Phlox divaricata

False Solomon’s Seal
Maianthemum racemosum

Blue Flag Iris
Iris virginica

shrevei

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