

# How to Create a Rain Garden

**Designing and planting a rain garden is much like creating any other perennial garden, with a few unique differences.**

- ◆ The garden must be located where runoff can be diverted into it, at least 10 feet away from building foundations and septic systems.
- ◆ A shallow, saucer-shaped depression is created in the garden to hold rain as it soaks in. The garden should be about 20-30% of the area from which it is receiving runoff.
- ◆ Soil replacement and additional preparations are sometimes needed for success. A good soil mix for rain gardens is 50-60% sand, 20-30% topsoil, and 20-30% compost.
- ◆ Species of perennial plants and shrubs native to our region are recommended, as they are adapted to local conditions and will not need extra care once they are established. Plant flood tolerant species in the center and drought tolerant ones around the edges. Berry-bearing and nectar-producing plants attract and nourish wildlife.
- ◆ A mulch of shredded hardwood is an integral part of your rain garden. It keeps the soil moist and ready to soak up rain, and makes your garden low-maintenance.

**Did You Know?** The average home roof is 1,300 square feet and generates 832 gallons of runoff during a single 1" rainfall event.

## Rain Garden Resources

New England Wildflower Society:  
<http://www.newfs.org/publications-and-resources/rain-gardens.html>

URI Healthy Landscapes:  
[www.uri.edu/ce/healthylandscapes/raingarden.htm](http://www.uri.edu/ce/healthylandscapes/raingarden.htm)

University of Connecticut Extension Service:  
[www.sustainability.ucon.edu/pdf/raingardenbroch.pdf](http://www.sustainability.ucon.edu/pdf/raingardenbroch.pdf)

Natural Resources Conservation Service:  
[www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/features/raingardens.html](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/features/raingardens.html)



## Going Green with Storm Water: Rain Gardens



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# Going Green with Storm Water

## Rain Gardens



## A Best Management Practice to:

- ◆ Reduce Stormwater Runoff
- ◆ Improve Water Quality
- ◆ Enhance Your Landscape

Make your own beautiful contribution to  
cleaner water in the Blackstone River  
Watershed.

Come visit Broad Meadow Brook's  
Demonstration  
Rain Garden



## What is a Rain Garden?

A rain garden is a shallow depression planted with perennial native plants that are tolerant of both dry and wet conditions. Rain gardens capture runoff from impervious surface areas such as rooftops and driveways and allow it to seep slowly into the ground. Most importantly, rain gardens help preserve nearby streams and ponds by reducing the amount of polluted runoff and filtering pollutants.

## Why Plant a Rain Garden?

Stormwater runoff from residential areas often contains excess lawn and garden fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, oil, yard wastes, sediment and animal wastes which cause water pollution.

Rain gardens fill with stormwater and allow the water to slowly filter into the ground rather than running off into storm drains, and eventually into streams and lakes.

Rain gardens reduce peak storm flows, helping to prevent stream bank erosion and lowering the risk for local flooding.

By collecting and using rainwater that would otherwise run off your yard, you not only return rain to the water table, but you are also creating a beautiful solution to water pollution.



## The Rain Garden at Broad Meadow Brook Conservation Center



The rain garden captures roof runoff from three down spouts, and a rain barrel captures the fourth. We use water from the rain barrel to irrigate when necessary.

We chose a variety of native plants that provide color and interest throughout the growing season. They produce nectar and berries to attract wildlife such as butterflies, hummingbirds, cedar waxwings and winter robins.

### Plant List:

#### Shrubs:

Sweet Pepperbush  
Dogwood  
Shamrock Inkberry  
Winterberry  
Gro-Low Sumac  
Lowbush Blueberry  
Highbush Blueberry  
Dwarf Fothergilla  
Slender Deutzia  
Potentilla

#### Perennials:

Dwarf Aster  
Swamp Milkweed  
Joe Pye Weed  
Coneflower  
Blazing Star  
Beebalm  
Blackeyed Susan  
Crested Iris  
Foamflower  
Yarrow  
Sea Oats



**Mass Audubon** is a lead partner in the Blackstone River Coalition (BRC) and the **Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River by 2015**. All of Worcester's waterways, including Broad Meadow Brook, are headwater tributaries to the Blackstone. To further implement the Campaign, the BRC is targeting polluted runoff and stormwater volume as the major issue impacting water quality.

The BRC's "Tackling Stormwater in the Blackstone River Watershed" Initiative is a four-pronged approach focusing on homeowners, municipal decision makers, developers, and businesses. See [www.zaptheblackstone.org](http://www.zaptheblackstone.org) for details.

Remember that anything that enters a storm drain in the road is discharged untreated into the water bodies we use for swimming, fishing, paddling, and recharging our drinking water supplies. The more we can all do to reduce stormwater impacts to our waterways, the healthier they will be.

