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Rain Garden Fact Sheet

What is a rain garden?



A rain garden is a planted shallow depression that uses water-tolerant native plants and landscaping to soak up stormwater flowing from downspouts or hard (impervious) surfaces, such as your driveway, patio, or sidewalk. Rain gardens allow water to slowly seep into the ground, reducing the amount of water that flows directly into the nearest storm drain, creek, or river. Rain gardens typically consist of an absorbent soil mix, a mulch layer, and plants such as shrubs, grasses, and flowering plants. Rain gardens are a beautiful, low-tech, inexpensive way for homeowners, communities, and businesses to help ease stormwater problems and reduce pollution in local streams and rivers.



What are the benefits to property owners and communities?

- Reduces stormwater problems on your property such as ponding or erosion.
- Protects local streams and the Chesapeake Bay.
- Replenishes the groundwater supply.
- Provides habitat for wildlife and increases the diversity of birds and butterflies.
- Provides an attractive alternative to traditional lawns and requires less maintenance.

How can you determine if your property is suitable for a rain garden?

Most properties are suitable for a rain garden--all you need is some sun exposure and enough space in the right place. Consider the following points to help you determine whether a rain garden will work on your property.

- Locate your rain garden at least 10 feet away and downhill from the foundations of any nearby homes.
- Place your rain garden at least 25 feet away from a septic field or a well head.
- Choose a gently sloped place that regularly receives runoff from hard surfaces or where downspouts can direct rainwater into your rain garden.
- Locate your rain garden in full or partial sun, avoid large tree roots, and identify areas that naturally pond.
- Evaluate the soil type at the location of the rain garden. Water must be able to seep into the soil quickly enough when the rain garden is full so that it will drain in 24 to 36 hours.
- Ensure that bedrock and groundwater is located at least 2 feet below the rain garden's surface.

Qualifying for a rebate

Project	Individual Residence or Individual Members of a Housing Cooperative	Commercial, Homeowner Associations, Condominium Associations, Civic Associations, Multi-Family Dwellings, Nonprofit, Not-for-Profit Organizations, Housing Cooperatives
Rain Gardens	\$10 per square foot (minimum of 100 square feet)	\$10 per square foot (minimum of 100 square feet)

What are the costs?

Costs range from \$4 to \$35 per square foot, depending on the source of the materials, site conditions and who does the work. Use of a professional contractor and landscaper will result in higher costs.

Can you do this project yourself?

Yes. A professional designer or qualified contractor may be needed if you must treat off-site drainage, have a steep slope, soils that don't drain well where an underdrain system is needed, are considering terracing, or have many trees (roots) on your property.

