



Rain Gardens

Rain gardens are attractive, landscaped areas planted with perennial native plants which don't mind getting "wet feet". Built in a shallow depression, the gardens are designed to increase infiltration allowing rain and snowmelt to seep naturally into the ground. Benefits of rain gardens are multiple: they recharge groundwater supply, prevent water quality problems, provide habitat for birds and butterflies, and are great looking landscape features.



Image courtesy of
Iowa NRCS

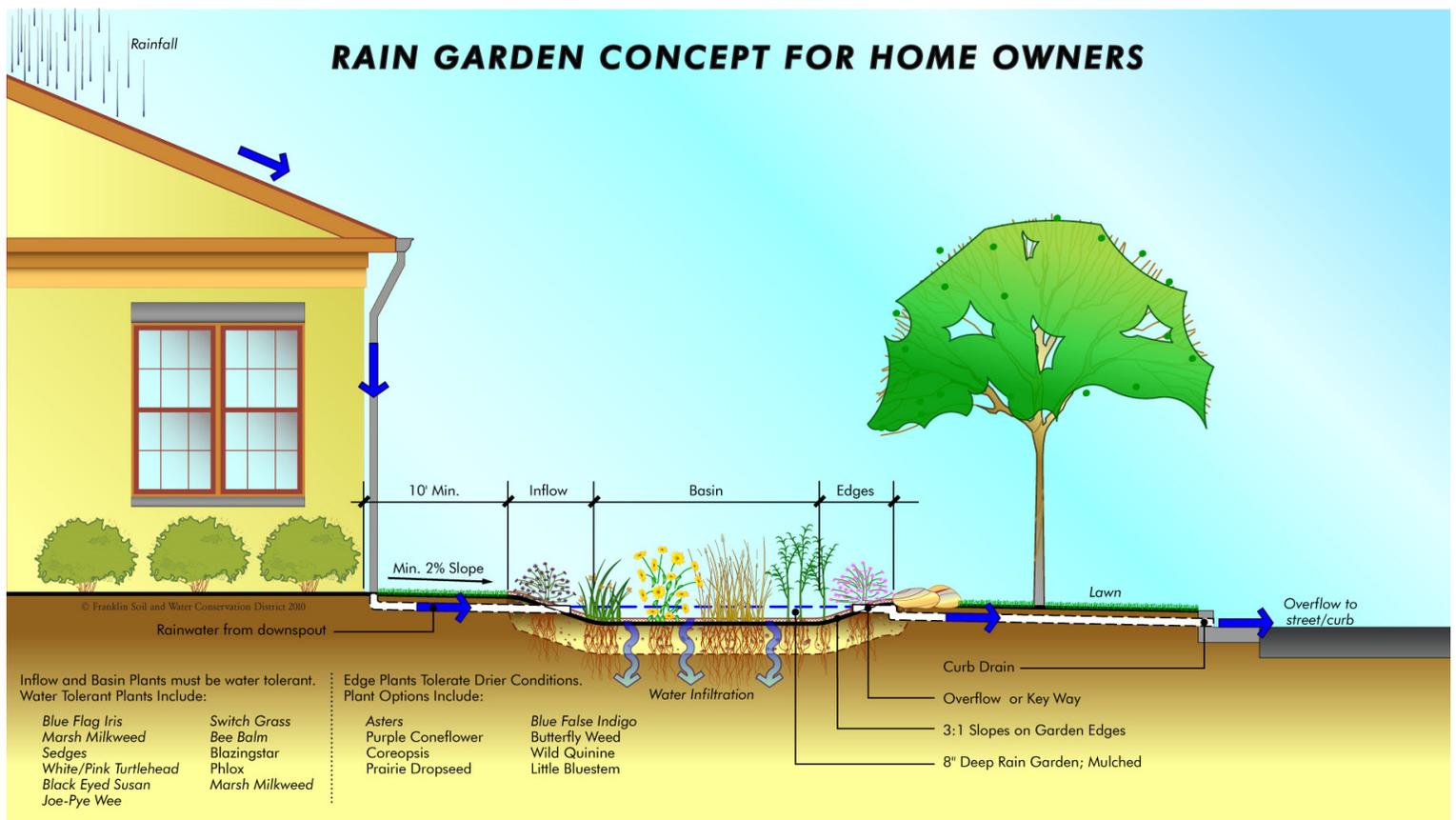
Why Do We Need Rain Gardens?

As development increases, the ability of our environment to perform its natural processes decreases. This is because the natural landscape that was once able to absorb and clean storm water is covered by impervious surfaces. Impervious surfaces are simply surfaces that water is unable to penetrate, such as roads, rooftops, and driveways.

Increased impervious surfaces result in an increased amount of storm water runoff and an increased chance for pollution to enter our waterways through our storm sewer systems. Pollution that results from storm water runoff is called nonpoint source pollution. Studies have shown that up to 70% of the pollution in our streams, rivers and lakes is carried there by runoff from practices we carry out in our own yards and gardens! Some of the common nonpoint source pollutants from our yards that end up in our local waterways include soil, fertilizers, pet wastes, grass clippings and other yard debris.

Installing a rain garden may seem like a small thing, but if you calculate the amount of rain that runs off one lot, you might be surprised. Rain gardens capture the rain that usually runs off our property and allow it to soak into the ground. This helps minimize runoff and reduces the amount of nonpoint source pollution that enters our waterways. Rain gardens help our communities "bloom" making them more attractive places to live while maintaining watershed health.

RAIN GARDEN CONCEPT FOR HOME OWNERS



Common Misconceptions

Myth: Rain gardens can help with a poorly draining spot in my yard.

Fact: Not necessarily. Directing even more water into a wet spot could compound a problem wet area. It's best to place a rain garden in an area where 4-8" of water can drain in about 24 hours.

Myth: Rain gardens are breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

Fact: When designed correctly, a rain garden will drain completely within 24 hours. Mosquitoes require standing water to last for at least 5-7 days to successfully reproduce.

Myth: Rain gardens get polluted, or can pollute groundwater.

Fact: Many studies have shown rain gardens to be very effective at removing pollutants through biological processes. Plants are really good at cleaning!

Design and Construction

See our "Quick Guide to Planning and Installing Rain Gardens" handout for detailed instructions on how to create your own rain garden!

Resources:

Central Ohio Rain Garden Initiative—www.centralohioraingardens.org

Toledo-Lucas County Rain Garden Initiative—www.raingardeninitiative.org

Greater Cincinnati Rain Garden Alliance—www.millcreekwatershed.org/rain-gardens.html



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