Choosing a Spot

Rain gardens can be designed to catch water from a roof or even a driveway. When choosing a location for your garden, pick an area that is relatively flat or has a slight depression. Keep the following considerations in mind:

- Rain gardens are NOT a solution to wet areas! The garden must have good drainage so that water can soak in within 24 hours after a rainfall. This will also prevent your garden from becoming a mosquito haven.
- The garden should be at least ten feet away from the house. Use a gutter extension or build a swale to direct rainwater from roof gutter or driveway to garden.
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- The garden should receive full or partial sunlight.
- Avoid the area over a septic system.
- The garden must include an overflow outlet that will transport excess rainfall to a proper location (not your neighbor’s lawn!)

How Big?

The size of your garden will depend upon three main factors:

1. The size of the drainage area
2. The type of soils on the site
3. The depth of the garden

A typical residential rain garden ranges from 100 to 300 square feet. For advice on calculating the dimensions of your garden, call the Cornell Cooperative Extension phone number on the back of this brochure.

Ready to Dig?

- Use a hose or string to outline the shape of your garden.
- On a slope, more digging will be required on the uphill side. Use extra soil to build a berm on the downhill side.
- The bottom of the garden must be flat and level. It should look like a saucer, not like a bowl.
- Don’t forget to make an overflow for heavy rain events!

Plant Selection

Choose plants that have a variety of heights, textures, and bloom times. Native perennial plants are recommended. It is important to select plants that can tolerate both wet and dry conditions, and that are suited to the sun/shade exposure of your garden. Examples include:

- Blue Flag Iris
- Black-eyed Susan
- Blazing Star
- Green-headed Coneflower

Call before you dig Dig Safe NY (1-800-962-7962) to locate any underground utility lines!
An Introduction to Rain Gardens

What is stormwater runoff?
Stormwater runoff is the water that runs over and off the land during a rainstorm or snowmelt, rather than soaking in.

What's the problem?
As stormwater runs over streets, parking lots, and lawns it can pick up and carry many kinds of materials that then get washed into nearby streams and lakes. This leads to stormwater pollution!

Where do these pollutants come from?
Stormwater picks up contaminants that come from these sources and more:
- Fertilizers
- Pesticides
- Bacteria from pet waste
- Eroded soil
- Road salt
- Grass clippings
- Litter
- Petroleum products

Rain gardens are a beautiful and beneficial addition to any landscape. By capturing rain water, they help to cleanse and reduce stormwater pollution and protect local streams, lakes, rivers and watersheds.

Plant a Rain Garden of Your Own!
- Add beauty & interest to your yard
- Contribute to cleaner water
- Increase groundwater recharge
- Provide habitat for butterflies & wildlife

Visit any of the following sites to see one of Albany County's Demonstration Rain Gardens:
- Elm Avenue Park - Bethlehem
- Vietnam Memorial Park - Cohoes
- Shaker Heritage Site - Colonie
- William Rice Jr. Extension Center - Voorheesville

For more information about rain gardens, or how to design and construct one for your own yard, contact:
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Albany County
  518-765-3500   http://www.ccealbany.com
- Albany County Soil & Water Conservation District
  518-447-5645   http://www.albanycounty.com/swcd
- Albany County Stormwater Coordinator

Or Visit:
http://www.sustainability.uconn.edu/pdf/raingardenbroch.pdf

Project collaborators:
- Albany County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Albany County
- Stormwater Coalition of Albany County

This publication was made possible through funding by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund through the Hudson River Estuary Program of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Special thanks to Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County and Rockland County SWCD for originally developing this brochure.

Plant a Rain Garden of Your Own!
- Add beauty & interest to your yard
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- Provide habitat for butterflies & wildlife

Rain gardens capture and filter stormwater, helping to prevent stormwater from polluting the waters of Albany County.

Elm Avenue Park - Bethlehem

Albany County Demonstration Rain Gardens

Gardens constructed by Cornell Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners and Staff, Albany County Soil and Water Conservation District Staff and Municipality Staff.

These rain gardens capture runoff from adjacent parking lots, roofs and other impervious surfaces, helping to prevent stormwater from polluting the waters of Albany County.