

# Simple Steps to Build a Rain Garden

1. Choose a location. A sunny area with well drained soil is best. If you want to capture the water from your downspout, be sure that the downspout is directed across the lawn, towards the garden area. Watch which way the water runs when it rains, to help you choose the right spot!
2. Next, you will need to figure out how big you need the garden to be, using an online calculator, like this one: <http://raingardenalliance.org/right/calculator> The calculator will give you a size in square feet based on your roof area and the depth of the garden. Remember the roof area is only the area drained by the downspout pointed at the garden! For depth, 12" works well and is not too difficult to install. A rain garden can be any shape you like, to fit the space you have. Curved shapes look more natural, but rectangles are fine, too.
3. Once you have the location and size selected, its time to start planning your plantings! You can use one of our planting templates or take a recommended plant list and choose your own. Plants in a rain garden should be a little closer together than they would be in a perennial border. Most native grasses can be spaced at 24" from the center of one to the center of the next. Flowering perennials are usually spaced closer, at 18" on center. Check the mature size to be sure of the spacing. Plant suggestions can be found at: <http://extension.psu.edu/plants/gardening/eco-friendly/rain-gardens/plants-rain-gardens>
4. Time to start building your garden! Look around the area and think of your plant list. Are you planting any small trees at the edge? Make sure you're not under power lines. If there are trees nearby, you may need to shift your location out of the shade or change some of the plants you have selected. Digging will be much easier if the garden is not under the canopy of a tree. Once you're sure you have the right spot, measure out the garden and draw the shape on the ground with marking paint or spray paint. If you're digging it yourself, you may want to get some friends to help. Dig the entire garden area down the full 12" before planting any plants. After planting, its best not to use a regular wood mulch. A thin layer of decorative stones will make a great mulch that doesn't float or fill in your rain garden.
5. Maintain your rain garden as you would maintain any planting bed. A rain garden only holds water for 24—48 hours, so plants will need water during long dry spells. During the first growing season after planting, water your rain garden regularly. After the first year, most native plants will not need frequent watering. In the late winter or early spring, usually February or March, cut down the previous summer's growth on the ornamental grasses. Be sure to collect and remove the cut stalks. Do not replenish mulch each year, as that will fill in your rain garden and reduce its effectiveness.

Additional information is available from the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service.

Download The New Jersey Rain Garden Manual at [http://www.water.rutgers.edu/Rain\\_Gardens/RGWebsite/RainGardenManualofNJ.html](http://www.water.rutgers.edu/Rain_Gardens/RGWebsite/RainGardenManualofNJ.html)

# Rain Garden Info Sheet

Please Fill in the Following Information and Bring this to the Rain Garden Workshop. We can help you with any information you are missing.

1. What is the square footage of your house and how many floors? OR What is the length and width of your house?
2. How many downspouts do you have?
3. How many downspouts do you want to direct to the rain garden?
4. Please take some pictures of your yard, in the area where you are thinking of building a rain garden. Pictures on your phone are fine.