

Rain gardens and water quality

FACT SHEET

What's the problem?

When rain falls on impervious surfaces such as rooftops, roads, parking lots and driveways, it runs off into storm drains and into our rivers and streams. Stormwater runoff picks up pollution such as fertilizer, pesticides, sediment, motor oil, litter, and pet and yard waste as it flows over hard surfaces. The pollution in stormwater runoff then ends up in our streams and rivers.

How can a rain garden help?

A rain garden looks like a regular perennial garden in many ways. It is designed with deep-rooted plants that come back year after year; it is pretty to look at and it often has lovely flowers, grasses, trees and shrubs. So what makes it different from any other perennial garden? Rain gardens soak up stormwater and keep it from running off into storm drains. There are certain qualities that make a rain garden unique:

- Rain gardens have areas where water pools and have plants that can tolerate periodic wet feet.
- Rain gardens absorb and filter rain, and reduce stormwater runoff.
- Rain gardens are often planted with species native to the region, which require less attention once they are established.
- Rain gardens are often located adjacent to hard surfaces, such as parking lots and driveways, and catch water running off those surfaces.
- Rain gardens mimic the functions of nature's forests and meadows, by soaking up rainwater and slowing runoff and flooding.

What are other rain garden benefits?

In addition to reducing and filtering stormwater runoff, rain gardens provide many other benefits. They provide habitat for wildlife and, with the proper selection of plants, increase the number and diversity of birds and butterflies for those who enjoy watching them. Rain gardens provide an attractive and creative alternative to traditional lawn landscapes and require less maintenance because they do not need to be mowed, fertilized, or watered once established. They may also increase property values with creative landscaping designs.

Source: <https://ag.umass.edu/fact-sheets/rain-gardens-way-to-improve-water-quality>



For more info:

www.frcog.org

www.greenfield-ma.gov

