Some Sample Rain Garden Plants

Arrowhead
Sagittaria latifolia
(1-3' High, Blooms: July-Sept.)

Bottlebrush sedge
Carex hystericina
(1-3' High, Blooms: May-July)

Cardinal flower
Lobelia cardinalis
(2-4' High, Blooms: July-Sept.)

Culver's root
Veronicastrum virginicum
(3-5' High, Blooms: July-Aug.)

False Dragon's Head
Physostegia virginiana
(1-4' High, Blooms: July-Sept.)

Fox sedge
Carex vulpinoidea
(1-3' High, Blooms: June-Aug.)

Golden Alexander
Zizia aurea
(1-2' High, Blooms: May-June)

Great blue lobelia
Lobelia siphilitica
(1-4' High, Blooms: Aug-Sept.)

Green bulrush
Scirpus atrovirens
(2-4' High, Blooms: May-July)

Purple prairie clover
Dalea purpurea
(1-2' High, Blooms: June-Aug.)

Mountain mint
Pycnanthemum virginianum
(1-4' High, Blooms: July-Sept.)

New England aster
Aster novae-angliae
(1-4' High, Blooms: Aug.-Oct.)

Prairie blazing star
Liatris pycnostachya
(2-4' High, Blooms: July-Sept.)

River bulrush
Scirpus fluviatilis
(3-5' High, Blooms: June-Aug.)

Dogtooth Daisy
Helenium autumnale
(2-4' High, Blooms: Aug.-Oct.)

Soft-stemmed bulrush
Scirpus validus
(3-9' High, Blooms: May-July)

Spotted Joe-pye
Eupatorium maculatum
(2-5' High, Blooms: July-Sept.)

Stiff goldenrod
Solidago rigida
(1-4' High, Blooms: July-Oct.)

Red milkweed
Asclepias incarnata
(2-4' High, Blooms: July-Aug.)

Sweet flag
Acorus calamus
(1-3' High, Blooms: May-June)

Torrey's rush
Juncus torreyi
(1-3' High, Blooms: June-July)

Water plantain
Alisma subcordatum
(1-3' High, Blooms: June-Sept.)

Wild bergamot
Monarda fistulosa
(2-4' High, Blooms: July-Aug.)

Wild blue flag iris
iris virginica shrevei
(1-3' High, Blooms: May-July)

Brochure design courtesy of Applied Ecological Services, Inc.
Want more information? Call or visit us at www.appliedeco.com

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Kaw River Restoration Nurseries
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For more details on Rain Garden construction, go to: www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/dsfm/shore/raingarden.htm.

Taylor Creek Restoration Nurseries, Spring Lake Restoration Nurseries and *Kaw River Restoration Nurseries* are divisions of Applied Ecological Services, Inc., 17921 Smith Road, Brodhead, WI 53520. Visit us at **www.appliedeco.com**.

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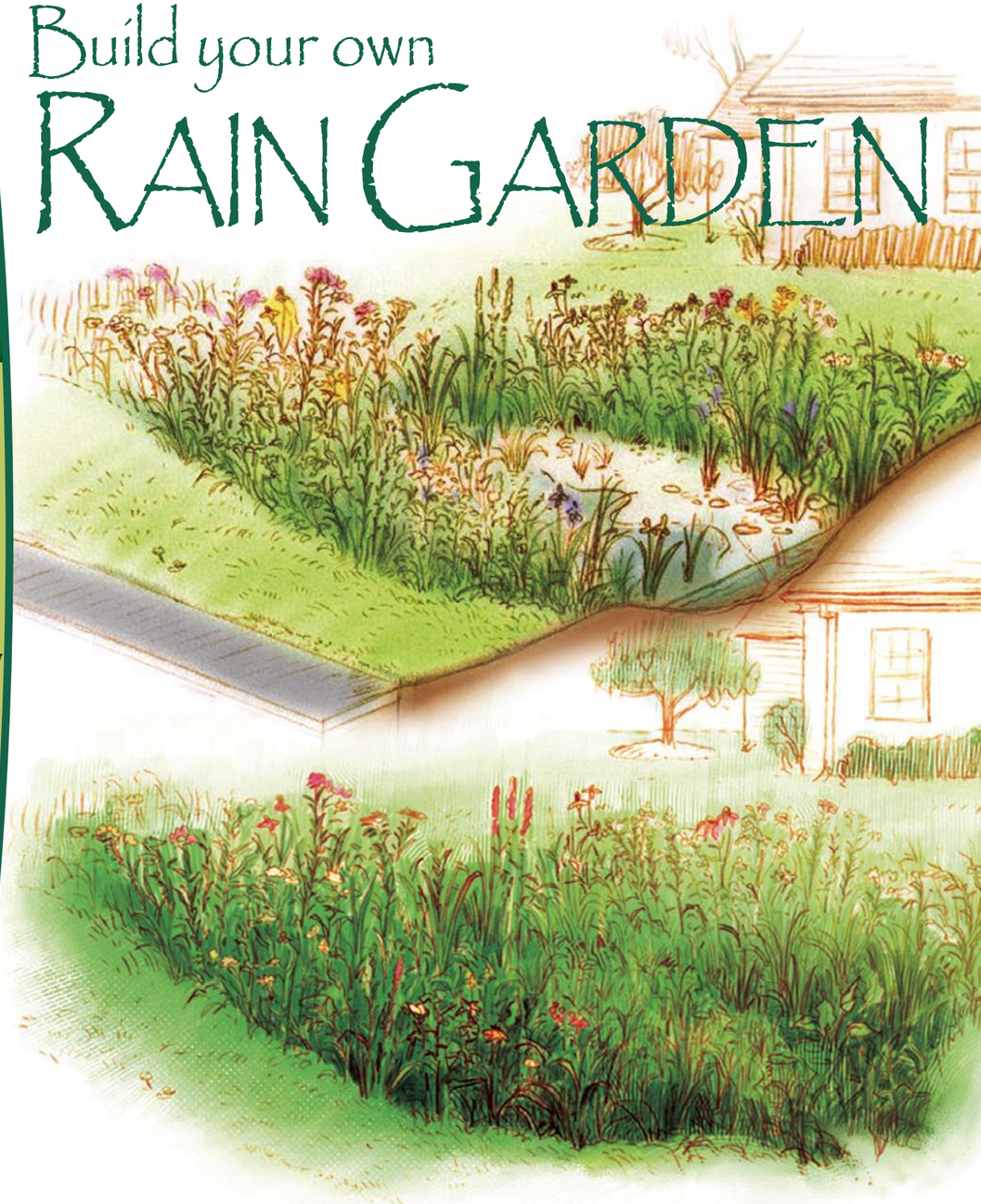
What is a Rain Garden?

A "Rain Garden" is simply a shallow depression in your yard that's planted with native wetland or wet-prairie wildflowers and grasses. Its purpose is to gather, filter and infiltrate rainwater into the ground (restoring the aquifer), provide habitat for wetland fauna and deliver enjoyment for its owner (that's you!).

Natural Land Institute
Conserving Land in Northern Illinois

Conservation@Home
A Program of Natural Land Institute
www.naturalland.org

Build your own RAIN GARDEN



Natural Land Institute • 320 South Third Street, Rockford, Illinois, 61104 • 815-964-6666

Rain Garden Design

What is a Rain Garden?

A Rain Garden is simply a shallow depression that is planted with native wetland or wet-prairie wildflowers and grasses. It is designed to collect water that runs off your roof or is discharged from your sump pump. Rain Gardens are gaining popularity for three reasons:

1. Rain Gardens make good use of stormwater runoff; the native plants filter and clean runoff before infiltrating it into the ground, to restore the aquifer (our underground water supply). And by keeping runoff out of storm drains, rain gardens also help protect water quality in local lakes and streams.

2. Rain Gardens are planted with beautiful, hardy, low-maintenance native perennial plants.

3. Rain Gardens provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies and beneficial insects, such as mosquito-devouring dragonflies!

Simple Construction

It's *easy*! Just follow these easy steps:

1. Dig a shallow depression with a level bottom. Size depends on your type of soil and the area of your roof and/or drainage area. A good guesstimate is 20% of your drain area if your soil is sandy, 30% for loam, and 40-50% for clay.

Pick a naturally low spot in your yard at least 10 feet from your house. Full sun is best for the two example designs below. Try to choose a spot that gets at least a half-day of sunlight.

A depression of two to six inches is fine. Slope the sides gradually from the edge to the level bottom. For heavy clay soils, dig the rain garden deeper or mix topsoil with sand and compost to improve drainage. Test this with a garden hose. French drains can also aid infiltration.

2. Direct your downspout or sump pump outlet to your Rain Garden, either by digging a shallow swale—a linear depression designed to channel water—or by routing it through a buried 4" PVC pipe.

3. Plant your raingarden with native plants appropriate for your soil type and sun/shade conditions. See the examples below for ideas.

4. If it doesn't rain, water your planting every other day for the first few weeks, until plants are growing and well-established.

Once your native Rain Garden plants are established, they'll thrive without additional watering. Fertilizers are not recommended.

Too much of a good thing

During heavy rains, your rain garden may overflow. Make sure this overflow follows the drainage pattern originally designed for your lot. Test this by filling your depression with a garden hose and watching the overflow. If needed, dig a shallow swale to direct overflow toward the street or other downhill areas away from buildings.

Local Genotypes

Make sure the genotype of the plants/seed you use is proper for your area. A Yellow Coneflower from Texas isn't the same as a Yellow Coneflower from Minnesota, and shouldn't be planted there. It might not do well – or worse, it might do *too* well and crowd out surrounding species. Avoid this by using genotypes proper for your area. Unfortunately, growers who sell non-local genotypes (knowingly or not) may not even keep collection or source records, so the only dependable strategy is to buy from well-respected growers with established track records.

More Tips

- Weed biweekly until native plants are established.
- Avoid using lawn fertilizers near the Rain Garden. They stimulate weeds without benefitting your native plants.
- Don't worry about mosquitoes. A properly constructed rain garden will not hold water long enough for mosquitoes to reproduce, but even if they do, dragonflies, swallows and other natural controls will keep them in check.
- Come spring, mow and remove dead vegetation. Or burn it off if your fire-department regulations allow. Native plants thrive with fire management.
- Place natural rocks, bird houses, a bench or garden ornaments in and around your Rain Garden! Have fun with your own backyard landscape.
- Add plenty of native sedges and grasses to physically support taller species (hold them upright) and provide a visually textured background that ties the garden together.

The Conservation Foundation...

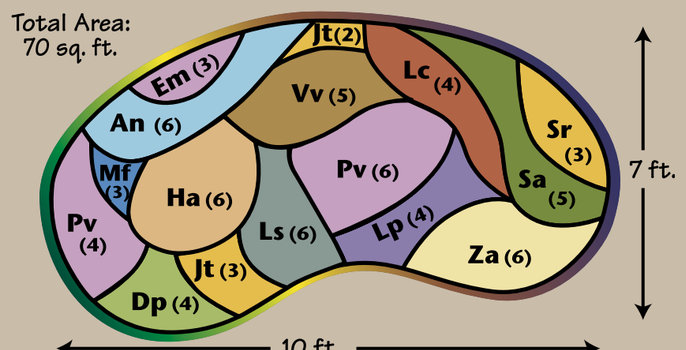
... is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving open space and natural lands, protecting rivers and watersheds, and promoting stewardship of the environment in N.E. Illinois.

Established in 1972, we work closely with citizens, elected officials, developers, land-use planners, park districts and forest preserves. We have helped protect more than 30,000 acres of open space.

The Conservation Foundation has more than 4,500 donors and members, and 500 volunteers.

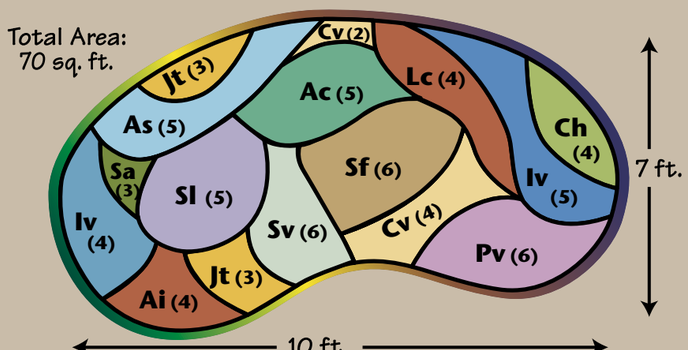
Our main office is at the McDonald Farm in Naperville, IL., with another at the Dickson-Murst Farm in Montgomery, IL. For more information, visit www.theconservationfoundation.org.

Example Rain Garden for Well-Drained to Sandy Soils



Abbrev.	Common Name	Species Name	No. of Plants	Shopping List
An	New England aster	*Aster novae-angliae*	6	☐
Dp	Purple prairie clover	*Dalea purpurea*	4	☐
Em	Spotted Joe-Pye	*Eupatorium maculatum*	3	☐
Ha	Dogtooth Daisy	*Helenium autumnale*	6	☐
Jt	Torrey's rush	*Juncus torreyi*	5	☐
Lp	Prairie blazing star	*Liatris pycnostachya*	4	☐
Lc	Cardinal flower	*Lobelia cardinalis*	4	☐
Ls	Great blue lobelia	*Lobelia siphilitica*	6	☐
Mf	Wild bergamot	*Monarda fistulosa*	3	☐
Pv	Mountain mint	*Pycanthemum virginianum*	10	☐
Sa	Green bulrush	*scirpus atrovirens*	5	☐
Sr	Stiff goldenrod	*Solidago rigida*	3	☐
Vv	Culver's root	*Veronicastrum virginicum*	5	☐
Za	Golden Alexander	*Zizia aurea*	6	☐
		Total Plants Needed	70	

Example Rain Garden for Clay Soils



Abbrev.	Common Name	Species Name	No. of Plants	Shopping List
Ac	Sweet flag	*Acorus calamus*	5	☐
Ai	Red milkweed	*Asclepias incarnata*	4	☐
As	Water plantain	*Alisma subcordatum*	5	☐
Ch	Bottle brush sedge	*Carex hystricina*	4	☐
Cv	Fox sedge	*Carex vulpinoidea*	6	☐
Iv	Wild blue flag iris	*Iris virginica shrevei*	9	☐
Jt	Torrey's rush	*Juncus torreyi*	6	☐
Lc	Cardinal flower	*Lobelia cardinalis*	4	☐
Pv	False dragon's head	*Physostegia virginiana*	6	☐
Sl	Arrowhead	*Sagittaria latifolia*	5	☐
Sa	Green bulrush	*Scirpus atrovirens*	3	☐
Sf	River bulrush	*Scirpus fluviatilis*	6	☐
Sv	Soft-stemmed bulrush	*Scirpus validus*	6	☐
		Total Plants Needed	69	

These designs are examples only. Please contact our nurseries for additional recommended species. With information on your region and site conditions, we can tailor the species selections with suggestions that are most appropriate for your rain garden.