



Your rain garden consists of a “pond” or a depression that water can flow into, and the soils that will absorb the water. Keep in mind that your “pond” will be dry most of the time.

Find the perfect spot for your rain garden by working with your property’s natural drainage pattern. When it’s raining, simply note the direction of rainwater runoff and the low spots where the water collects. If it’s not raining, you can locate runoff areas and low spots by running water onto your yard using your garden hose.

If the runoff areas and low spots are downhill and away from your building foundations, those spots will be good places for your rain garden. Standing water indicates an area where the soil is compacted and unable to absorb rainwater. Construction companies compact the soil to prevent sinkholes and to support building foundations. This compaction of soils makes the need for your rain garden even more critical.

Make Your Rain Garden Part of Your Landscape Design

Your rain garden can be part of your landscaping design if you create the low spots where the rainwater can flow to them directly. You can also get rainwater to them through underground piping. You can even build your rain garden on a slope by creating a level ‘scallop’ or a small terrace. Or you can create naturalized landscapes by deepening natural low spots that are too shallow.

If you’re creating a large rain garden or working with very hard soil, you might want to hire an excavator. You can have the excavator use the soil that’s removed to create a knoll or similar landscape feature, but keep in mind that heavy equipment driven on your property will compact your soil and reduce its ability to absorb water.

Five Things to Know Before You Start

Choosing a Spot – Stay at least 10 feet and down slope from buildings to avoid leaky foundations. If you have a septic system, stay away from the drain field – it doesn't need any more water.

Be aware of rights of way and underground lines or utilities

- Have the area flagged for underground service and utility lines
- Find out about restrictions in rights of ways
- (Hint: photograph the flagged areas so you have a record of the underground utility locations.)

*Call Diggers Hotline
before you start digging
for your rain garden.*

Re-Directing the Rain

If rainwater doesn't flow naturally to your chosen rain garden spot, don't worry. Underground piping or landscape features like channels or swales can direct it. A simple rain barrel can direct rainwater to the garden through the overflow hose.

If Your Land Slopes

Create a "weep" rain garden by building a small retaining wall and filling in behind it, or plant your rain garden in a 'scallop' dug out of the side of a hill.

Don't Dig A Large Rain Garden Under Large Trees

Trees are very good at absorbing rain. But root systems can be damaged during excavation or by directing ponds of water to the roots of trees that won't grow in rain garden conditions causing trees to weaken or die.