

WHY Native Plants?



People use all kinds of plants in rain gardens, but most elect to use some or all native plants.

A rain garden planted with a variety of plants adaptable to rain garden conditions will provide years of enjoyment to homeowners. Since rain gardens typically include low excavated areas as well as mounded areas, growing conditions can vary dramatically within each rain garden.

Hardy native species that thrive in our ecosystem without chemical fertilizers and pesticides are the best choices. Many rain gardens feature shrubs as well as wild flowers and grasses. As a rule, the less “turf” on lawns, the better it is from a water quality stand point – turf-style lawns create a harder surface which does not absorb water as readily as garden areas. Also, turf-style lawns often require chemical treatments and extra water to look uniform. Yards that feature native plants, grasses and shrubs are much easier to maintain!

Regardless of plant source and type, adaptability to the specific conditions found in the garden is one of the most important considerations for aesthetic and functional rain garden success.

Nursery professionals or garden clubs can help you choose plants best suited for your garden based on soil, hours of light and your design. Take your sketch with you when you go to purchase plants. Garden clubs, often sell native species that are best adapted to our climate, will attract birds, native butterflies, and dragonflies, thus providing a new habitat for local wildlife.

Native plants require little maintenance once established. When choosing the kinds of natives you’ll plant, take into account height, colors and when they’ll bloom. Many native plants have deep roots; these fantastic roots form deep channels that not only absorb rainwater but find water during dry periods. Some of the roots die each year, and new ones grow. Decomposing roots make the soil more fertile and absorbent. The root systems hold soil together and help prevent erosion.

DO NOT TAKE YOUR NATIVE PLANTS FROM THE WILD!

Taking plants from the wild disturbs local plant ecosystems. Often, taking wild plants is illegal. You have other options that will keep ecosystems in place and still fill your rain garden with native species.