

Rain Gardens

Rain gardens are a wonderful way to improve water quality in your area while enjoying the beauty and other benefits of native plants. A rain garden is different from a regular garden in a few ways; its set in a shallow depression (6-12in) often with a sand/compost mix at the bottom, water is directed toward it and it features native plants.

The benefits include adding beauty to your yard, absorbing runoff which can reduce erosion and filter pollutants out of the water, provide habitat and food for pollinators and has potential reduce wet spots in your yard and therefore mosquito populations



Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District

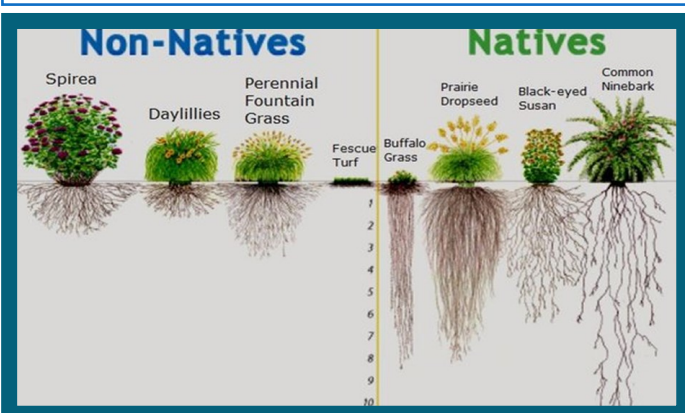


Why are native plants important?

In nature, plants commonly grow in association with a particular group of other compatible plants. These communities are found where specific environmental conditions exist (e.g. soils, topography, climate, water).

Vegetation removal and soil disturbance (and soil compaction) reduces the amount of runoff absorbed, increasing sediment-laden runoff into lakes, streams & wetlands.

When native plants are replaced by turf grass, that has very short roots, the water can no longer filter into the ground and becomes run-off. Run-off picks up pollutants and excess nutrients, carrying them more directly into near by water bodies. Native plants have deeper root systems that allow water to filter into the ground and absorb nutrients.



Rain Barrels are also an effective way to collect rain water from downspouts to be reused!



What Can East Polk SWCD Do to Help?

East Polk SWCD partners with Prairie Restorations to ensure that projects are well designed with 40 years of experience in native planting. However, after design you can choose to hire them to do the work or if you like DIY (do-it-yourself) projects a rain garden is not that difficult to put in. You dig out the basin, mix in a sand and compost mixture after tilling up the bottom of the basin, over lay the mulch and then plant the plants. It can be a fun project for your family!

FAQ's about Raingardens

Is a rain garden a pond?

- Rain gardens are designed to hold water for no more than 24-48 hours. Unlike ponds, you don't need costly pumps, electricity, or filters. In fact, a rain garden is a filter for the water that runs off of your property's impervious surfaces.

How much maintenance is required?

- Less than a regular garden, if you use native plants. They adapt well to their natural surroundings, and don't need fertilizers or pesticides. While your natives are establishing their roots, water them every other day or so for two to three weeks, or until you see that they're thriving. After that, you'll never need to water them except during a prolonged dry spell.

Won't it attract mosquitoes?

- Properly installed, your rain garden shouldn't hold water long enough for mosquito larvae to complete their 7-to-12-day life cycle. Rain gardens also attract dragonflies, who find mosquitoes quite tasty.

Do I have to use native plants?

- Natives have adapted to our climate and are much better at handling the periodic inundation (getting their feet wet) that goes along with a rain garden. They'll also save you the time and money of replanting every year, and offer much greater wildlife value.

What about winter?

- Even though your plants will be dormant, in the winter gardens can still help slow down water movement and enable it to be absorbed into the ground. Water may remain longer, particularly when the ground is frozen, but that's not a problem in winter.

Can it be too large or too small?

- With the help of a landscaper or other professional, you can size your garden to handle all the rain that normally falls here. You don't have to plan gardens to capture all of the rain water from your house. For example, capturing water from a single downspout will help.

<http://raingardenalliance.org/what/faqs>

Ask us about Cost-Share Opportunities!