

Rain Garden FAQ's

Will a rain garden provide a breeding ground for mosquitoes?

No. A properly designed rain garden will drain before mosquitoes can reproduce. It takes 10-14 days for a mosquito to develop from an egg into an adult. The rain gutters on your home are more likely to provide a better breeding ground than a rain garden.

Do all rain gardens have a wild and messy appearance?

No. Rain gardens do have a natural rather than a manicured appearance, but they need not look messy. You can keep a rain garden looking neat and attractive by keeping the edges well defined. Taller plants often have a more unkempt appearance; so use shorter plants if you want your garden to have a cleaner look.

Would a rain garden cause flooding in my basement?

Not if they are properly located and designed. Rain gardens should be located at least ten feet away from buildings so that water does not drain along foundations. Also, your rain garden should drain away from rather than toward buildings.

Would I need to water my rain garden during dry periods?

Maybe. How much water your rain garden needs will depend on the plants you choose. Native plants are adapted to a wide range of conditions, so they will only need watering in the driest seasons.

Additional Resources

- For technical assistance call the Water Pollution Control Division, (785) 368-3852.
- Check out these websites:

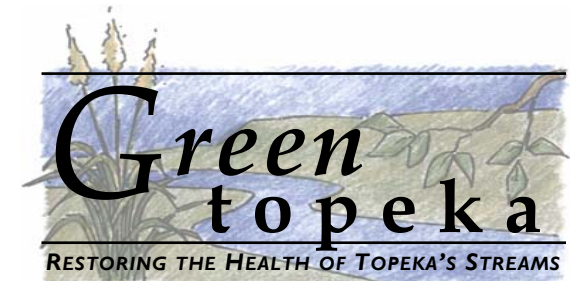
www.greentopeka.com

www.raingardens.org

www.consciouschoice.com/environs/raingardens1405.html

natsci.edgewood.edu/wingra/management/raingardens/

www.chicagowildernessmag.com/issues/spring2001/raingardens.html



Source: City of Maplewood, Minnesota, Website: www.ci.maplewood.mn.us/PublicWorks/RainWater%20Garden/

RAIN GARDENS

City of Topeka
Water Pollution Control
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Water Pollution Control
A Division of Public Works
City of Topeka, Kansas

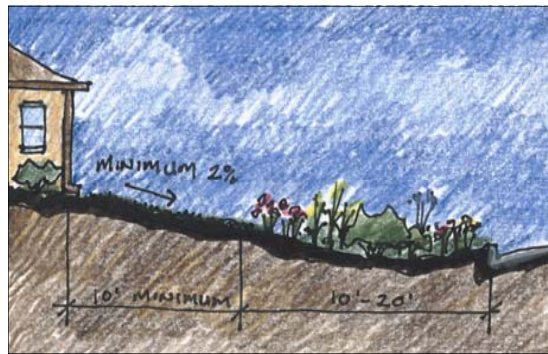
You Can Make a Difference

How can you help improve the water quality of our streams and lakes? One easy way is to build a rain garden to collect and filter the runoff from your home. Polluted runoff is a major source of water pollution. As water flows over roofs, driveways, sidewalks, and other hard surfaces, it picks up nonpoint source pollutants like gasoline, oil, metal particles, fertilizers, pesticides, and other harmful chemicals. Once it reaches the storm drain, polluted runoff flows directly into our local streams. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, nonpoint source pollution accounts for 70% of surface water pollution.

What is a rain garden?

A rain garden is a planted area with a shallow depression that collects and holds runoff before it reaches the storm drain. Rainwater is directed into the garden from roof drains, driveways, and other hard surfaces. This water temporarily floods the garden and slowly seeps into the soil over a period of several days. Light rain showers will fill the garden, and larger storms will cause it to overflow into the regular storm drainage system.

Rain gardens improve water quality by reducing and filtering runoff. The most



A section through a typical rain garden. Shrubs are usually planted in the center of the garden with grasses and flowers along the edges.

polluted runoff occurs in the beginning of a rain shower as water rushes over hard surfaces. This water is the first to pick up sediments and pollutants and is known as the first flush. Rain gardens catch the first flush before it enters the storm drainage system. Sediments and pollutants settle out of the water and are absorbed by plant roots or treated

Rain Garden Benefits

- Help solve common drainage problems.
- Reduce runoff and recharge groundwater supplies.
- Keep sediments and pollutants out of streams.
- Attract birds and butterflies.
- Require less maintenance than grass lawns.
- Reduces the amount of watering in dry weather.



In this diagram, arrows show the path of runoff from home and lawn to rain garden, stormwater system, and stream. Rain gardens catch pollutants before they reach our streams.



A plan of a typical front yard rain garden. The garden is located to catch runoff from the lawn and rain gutters.

through chemical processes in the soil.

Rain gardens range in size, shape, and plantings, but they do share some common elements. Rain gardens are typically 6-18" deep and approximately 200 square feet. The size and shape of the garden can be adapted to front, back, and side yards. The best locations are adjacent to hard surfaces like sidewalks and driveways or in drainage areas like ditches. If you have an existing area where water pools after a rain, consider converting it to a rain garden. Plantings include shrubs, grasses, and flowers that are adapted to wet conditions. Native plants are often the best adapted to local growing conditions.

Building Your Rain Garden

A rain garden can be built using simple garden tools, and you can do most of the work yourself. The hardest part will be removing the existing sod and digging the depression to collect water. You may want to increase the soil's capacity to hold water by adding wood mulch, topsoil, or peat moss, although this is not necessary for most soils. When locating your garden, stay at least ten feet away from building foundations and make sure that your garden overflows away from your home toward the stormwater system.