



Raingarden 101



Photo by Leslie Pilgrim

A rain garden is a garden of deep-rooted native forbs (flowers), grasses, and shrubs planted in a shallow depression, designed to capture and infiltrate stormwater runoff that flows from roofs, driveways, patios, and lawns. Rain gardens are effective in infiltrating pollutants, lawn fertilizers and chemicals, and capturing sediments. By preventing runoff from flowing down roadsides to stormdrains—and sending polluted stormwater runoff to the nearest waterbody—raingardens play an important role in helping to prevent water pollution.

A rain garden is not a water garden, pond, or wetland.

After a rainfall, a rain garden will be damp or wet. But between rainfall events, the garden can range from slightly moist to dry, to very dry.

Because of the wide variability in soil moisture, raingardens are planted with resilient native vegetation that can withstand wide swings in soil moisture.

Plants placed in the basin of a rain garden, where rainfall collects, need to be especially resilient in order to withstand the “wet-dry challenge.”

A rain garden is designed to drain within 48-72 hours.

As mosquito eggs typically need 72 hours to hatch, a well-designed rain garden will not become a mosquito breeding ground.

And, as raingardens are planted with native vegetation, fertilizer is never used.

Some Favorite Plants for the Wet-Dry Basin of a Sunny Rain garden

Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*)
—shrub

Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepius incarnata*)

Bottlebrush Sedge (*Carex comosa*)

Tussock Sedge (*Carex stricta*)

Fox Sedge (*Carex vulpinoidea*)

White Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)

Silky Dogwood (*Cornus amomum*)
—shrub

Red-Osier Dogwood shrub (*Cornus sericea*)

Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)

Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*)

Common boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)

Sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*)

Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) —shrub

Harlequin Blueflag (*Iris versicolor*)

Meadow Blazing Star (*Liatris ligulistylis*)

Prairie Blazing Star (*Liatris pycnostachya*)

Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)

Great Blue Lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)

Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)

Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*)

Obedient Plant (*Physostegia intermedia*)

Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)

Pussy Willow (*Salix discolor*) — shrub/
small tree

Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)

New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)

Ironweed (*Vernonia fasciculata*)

Culver's Root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*)

Golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*)

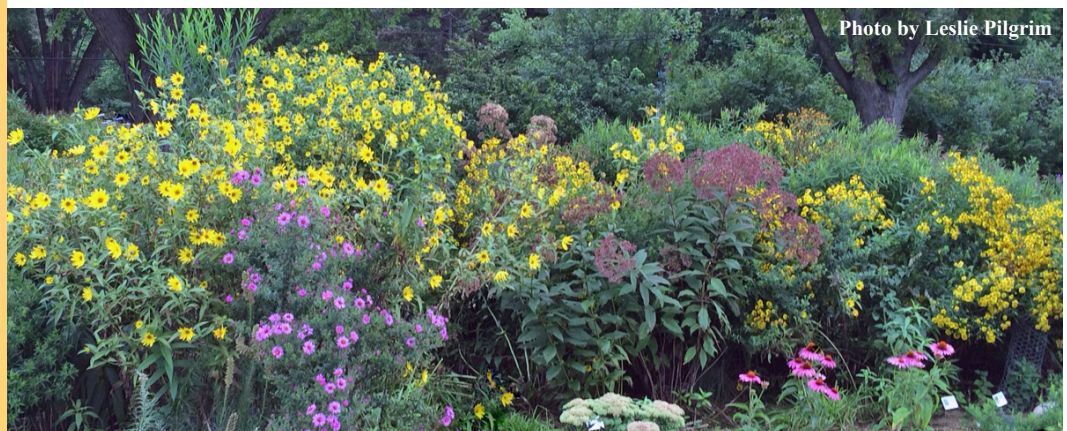


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