

East Cocalico Township



Rain Garden Resources

What & Why

Rain gardens are landscape features designed to decrease the amount of stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces, such as driveways, roofs, and other man-made features. They work by catching some of the stormwater runoff in a depression that has specially modified soils that will increase the rate at which water is able to soak into the ground. In addition, they have plants selected because of their ability to survive in conditions where the soil is wet for extended periods of time, but can also be relatively dry between storms. These plants take up water through their roots and release some of it into the air via transpiration through their leaves. Some plant species are able to remove very significant amounts of water in this manner.

There are many different designs for rain gardens. They are customized for the particular situation based on soil type, slope of the ground, location relative to impervious surfaces, local climate conditions, and other factors. In addition, these BMPs (Best Management Practices for controlling stormwater runoff), if properly designed, can serve as attractive landscaping features adding visual appeal to your property.

Many of the characteristics of rain gardens need to be engineered to match the environmental conditions and their functions as a BMP. They are often part of a stormwater management plan created to control runoff from new impervious features being built on a property. In these cases, the plant species to be used in the rain gardens are usually specified by the designer. You should be able to work with the designers to give them some input on how you would like the gardens to look and the types of plants to be used.

Rain gardens can also be used on existing properties to address stormwater problems not related to recent development. These rain gardens don't need to meet rigid specifications and functional parameters. They can be used by homeowners to help with environmental issues (and

reduce their own impact on the environment, their “ecological footprint”) and at the same time to beautify and potentially increase the value of their property.

How

Much has been written about rain gardens. Rather than trying to reinvent the wheel, we are providing links here to some useful Internet resources on rain gardens and what plants to use in them. There are also many “How-to” videos on YouTube. Just search on “rain gardens” (with the quotes) to find them” https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=”rain+gardens” .

Rain Gardens - Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy

<https://www.perkiomenwatershed.org/rain-gardens>

Native Plants For Rain Gardens - Chester Ridley Crum Watersheds Association

<https://www.crcwatersheds.org/native-plants-for-rain-garden/>

Rain Gardens - the Plants - Penn State University Extension

<https://extension.psu.edu/rain-gardens-the-plants>

Rain Garden Plants - Stroud Water Research Center

<https://stroudcenter.org/about/facilities/mec/stormwater/rain-garden-plants/>

Rain Gardens - Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania

<http://www.aswp.org/pages/rain-gardens>

Native Plants for a Rain Garden – PennLive - The Patriot-News (Harrisburg, PA)

https://www.pennlive.com/gardening/2010/02/native_plants_for_a_rain_garde.html

Plant List - Three Rivers Rain Garden Alliance

<http://raingardenalliance.org/planting/plantlist>

Native Plant Sources - Pennsylvania Native Plant Society

<https://www.panativeplantsociety.org/native-plant-sources.html>

How to Build a Rain Garden to Filter Run-Off - This Old House

<https://www.thisoldhouse.com/gardening/21016338/how-to-build-a-rain-garden-to-filter-run-off>

How to Make a Simple Rain Garden to Solve Storm Water Problems - Better Homes & Gardens

<https://www.bhg.com/gardening/landscaping-projects/landscape-basics/make-a-rain-garden/>

Building Your Rain Garden - The Junior League Of Lancaster, PA

<https://www.jllancaster.org/wp-content/uploads/RainGarden-Curriculum1FINAL-linked.pdf>

Help

The following links are to resources where you may be able to get your questions answered and receive other help in designing and building your own rain garden.

Lancaster County Conservation District

<https://lancasterconservation.org>

Penn State University Extension

<https://extension.psu.edu/>

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