

RAIN GARDEN MANUAL

for HOMEOWNERS

Protecting our water, one yard at a time



What is a Rain Garden?

A rain garden is an attractive, landscaped area planted with perennial native plants which don't mind getting "wet feet." They are beautiful gardens, built in depressions, which are designed to capture and filter storm water runoff from impervious surfaces around the home, such as rooftops and driveways.



The benefits of rain gardens are multiple and include their ability to perform the following functions:

- ☞ Help keep water clean by filtering storm water runoff before it enters local waterways.
- ☞ Help alleviate problems associated with flooding and drainage.
- ☞ Enhance the beauty of individual yards and communities.
- ☞ Provide habitat and food for wildlife including birds and butterflies.
- ☞ Recharge the ground water supply.

Why Do We Need Rain Gardens?

As development increases, there are more demands placed on our local environment. Impervious surfaces associated with development, such as rooftops, driveways and roads, are areas that shed rainwater. Construction activity on development sites usually compacts the soil, limiting the ground's capacity to absorb water. Taken together, these factors reduce the ability of our landscape to absorb and filter storm water.

Impervious surfaces can negatively affect our environment as they increase storm water runoff. Consequently they increase the chance for pollution to enter our waterways through our storm drainage systems, including sewers and open ditches, which flow untreated to our streams and lakes. The type of pollution that results from storm water runoff is called nonpoint source pollution. Studies by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) have shown that a substantial amount of the pollution in our streams, rivers and lakes is carried there by runoff from our own yards and gardens. Some of the more common nonpoint source pollutants include fertilizers, pesticides, pet wastes, grass clippings and yard debris. An easy way to help keep these pollutants out of our local waterways is to install a rain garden!

