A Few Common Native Rain Garden Plants

**GRASSES**
- Big Blue Stem (Andropogon gerardii)
- Bluejoint Grass (Calamagrostis canadensis)
- Fox Grass (Sporobolus heterolepis)
- Indian Grass (Sorghastrum nutans)
- Little Blue Stem (Schizachyrium scoparium)
- Prairie Cordgrass (Spartina pectinata)
- Prairie Dropseed (Sporobolus heterolepis)
- Switchgrass (Panicum virgatum)
- Virginia Wild Rye (Elymus virginicus)

**SEDDS**
- Burr Sedge (Carex grayii)
- Arrowhead Sedge (Carex palaestra)
- Porcupine Sedge (Carex typhina)
- Riverbank Tussock Sedge (Carex emoryi)
- Tufted Sedge (Carex stricta)
- Yellow Fox Sedge (Carex radiata)

**TREES/SHRUBS**
- Alder (Alnus incana)
- American Black Birch (Betula lenta)
- American Hornbeam (Carpinus caroliniana)
- Buttonbush (Cephalanthus occidentalis)
- Gray Dogwood (Cornus racemosa)
- Hawthorn (Crataegus)
- Paper Birch (Betula papyrifera)
- Red Osoyongy (Cornus sericea)
- Red Osier Dogwood (Cornus sericea)
- Silky Dogwood (Cornus sericea)
- Spicebush (Lindera benzoin)
- Serviceberry (Amelanchier)

**Wildflowers (VIRGINIA)**
- Autumn Sneezeweed (Helenium autumnale)
- Blue Flag (Iris virginica)
- Bluejoint Grass (Calamagrostis canadensis)
- Boneset (Eupatorium perfoliatum)
- Bottle Carnian (Gardiana arenicola)
- Cardinal Flower (Lobelia cardinalis)
- Culvers Root (Veronicastrum virginicum)
- Darwins Blazing Star (Liatris danae)
- Flat-topped Aster (Aster umbellatus)
- Great Blue Lobelia (Lobelia siphilitica)
- Hollow Joe-Pye Weed (Eupatorium fistulosum)
- Marsh Milfoil (Alumhrough nervosa)
- Mountain Mint (Pycnanthemum virginianum)
- New England Aster (Aster novae-angliae)
- Pink Turfhead (Chelone obliqua)
- Purple Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea)
- Queen of the Prairie (Platanthera ciliaris)
- Redlick’s Goldenrod (Solidago riddellii)
- Showy Black-Eyed Susan (Rudbeckia speciosa)
- Smooth Ironweed (Vernonia fasciculata)
- Smooth Purple Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea)
- Spotted Joe-Pye Weed (Eupatorium maculatum)
- Swamp Aster (Aster novae-angliae)
- Swamp Asters (Aster novae-angliae)
- White Turfhead (Chelone obliqua)
- White Ginger (Asphodelus microcarpus)

**WATER PLANTS**
- Aquatic Plant (Hydrilla verticillata)
- Bog Bean (Menyanthes trifoliata)
- Chicory (Cichorium intybus)
- Common Water Hyacinth (Eichhornia crassipes)
- Field Arrowhead (Petasites hybridus)
- Great Blue Lobelia (Lobelia siphilitica)
- Water Hyacinth (Eichhornia crassipes)
- Water Iris (Iris pseudacorus)

**STRENGTHS**
- A Rain Garden is a shallow landscape area in your yard planted to wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, and other native vegetation.
- A Rain Garden collects rain water from your roof, driveway, sidewalks or lawn, and filters it by dissipating the water through soil and plants before it enters a storm drain, pond or stream. Rain Gardens are dry between precipitation events.
- A Rain Garden can be your personal contribution to cleaner water and an improved environment!
Site Requirements

- The site must be 10 feet from structures (home, shed, patio, etc.) that could be damaged by soil moisture.
- The site cannot be over a septic field.

**Ideally, your site should be**

- Full to partial sun.
- Quick draining soil of high organic content. See Step 2.
- Close to the source of runoff.
- Flat or bowl-shaped to minimize digging during construction of your garden.
- An existing site where water naturally pools after rain events, but dries up in 24 hours. It can also be a site that receives water from an impervious surface (roof, patio, driveway) by way of a swale or drainage pipe.

---

Soil Infiltration

- Dig a hole the size of a coffee can and saturate the soil with water. The best time to complete this activity is late winter to early spring.
- Fill the hole with water and measure the depth, returning in 4 hours to measure again.
- The difference in water depth after 4 hours should be equal to or exceed 1 inch. If the difference is less than 1 inch, seek professional assistance before building your rain garden.
- The site cannot be over a septic field. Install recommended rain garden plants (trees, shrubs, sedges, grasses, wildflowers). See back page for ideas.

**Ideally, your site should be**

- Full to partial sun.
- Group the same plants together in clumps of at least 3 for best effect.
- Quick draining soil of high organic content.
- Use grasses to help support flowers as they grow taller.
- Flat or bowl-shaped to minimize digging during construction of your garden.
- Rain gardens may require weeding until plants are of sufficient size to out-compete weeds. Use a mulch of organic matter and/or sand, can improve the drainage, especially in clay soils.

---

Size Calculation

- Measure the area of the impervious surfaces (roof, concrete, patio) that will drain to the rain garden.
- Most rain gardens are about 4 to 8 inches deep.
- For a rain garden that is 6 inches deep, multiply the impervious surface area by 25% to determine the size of your garden.
- Observe your garden after rain events. The garden needs to drain within 48 hours. If it doesn’t, make adjustments to the size, overflow area, density and type of plantings, or the amount of runoff being sent to the garden.

**Excavation**

- Call 1-800-382-5544 two days before you dig to locate any underground utilities.
- Remove the existing sod or plants.
- Dig a 6 inch depression (or bowl) with a level bottom. Build a small berm opposite the side of water entry using soil excavated from the garden. Allow a low point for water over 6 inches deep to escape.
- Some rain gardens may require a subsurface drain pipe. Consult a professional.

**Design**

- Select the shape and the dimensions that are appropriate for the area you need.
- Select appropriate numbers of native plants for the located site.
- Remember, this is your garden, so pick plants that you find attractive.
- A rock wall or other edging can be used to define the rain garden’s boundaries, but it is important that it is placed in a location that will not interfere with water flow.
- Rain gardens are designed to be dry between storm events. With proper drainage, mosquito larvae will not be a problem.

---

Installation and Maintenance

- Plant choice is important for your site. Install recommended rain garden plants (trees, shrubs, sedges, grasses, wildflowers). See back page for ideas.
- Group the same plants together in clumps of at least 3 for best effect.
- Use grasses to help support flowers as they grow taller.
- Install and care for plants as you would in other new landscaping.

---

Excavation

- Rain gardens may require weeding until plants are of sufficient size to out-compete weeds. Use a mulch of organic matter and/or sand, can improve the drainage, especially in clay soils.

- Keep the trash and sediment out.
- If your rain garden has a subsurface drain it will require additional maintenance. Consult a professional.
- Some rain gardens may require a subsurface drain pipe. Consult a professional.

- Rain gardens are designed to be dry between storm events. With proper drainage, mosquito larvae will not be a problem.