PRIOR LAKE
SPRING LAKE
WATERSHED DISTRICT

FACT SHEET: Raingardens

Raingardens improve water quality of nearby creeks, streams, lakes and rivers. Raingardens contain deep-rooted plants native to Minnesota that tolerate being partially flooded periodically. And the best part is that there is little maintenance after you dig, mulch and plant your raingarden. Other than simple weeding and watering, raingardens don't require a lot of attention, but add life and variety to your landscape.

Raingardens utilize deep-rooted native plants that tolerate a range of conditions. They survive both times of excessive rainfalls and those with little rain, which makes them easy to care for!
Photo credit: Rain Dog Designs, Gig Harbor, WA

Why are Raingardens Important?

As natural landscapes are replaced by development, increased stormwater runoff from impervious or hard surfaces creates a range of problems. Increased volumes of stormwater lead to increased flooding, costly improvements to stormwater conveyance systems, and movement of pollutants directly into waterbodies.

FAST FACTS

- ***Raingarden Water Drain Down Time:***
  24-48 hours for the most severe storms
- ***Stormwater Absorbency:***
  Raingardens absorb 30% more water than lawns of the same size.
- ***Pollutants Removed by Raingardens:***
  Up to 99% of nitrates, ammonias, phosphorus, sediment, and other pollutants.
- ***There is no need to fertilize raingardens:***
  Fertilizer causes native plants to grow too tall and fall over. It also stimulates weed growth, causing you more work.

Facts from BlueThumb, MetroBlooms, and UW-Extension.

Benefits of Raingardens

Raingardens reduce stormwater runoff, making them an important tool in reducing stormwater. While an individual raingarden may seem like a small thing, when adopted across a neighborhood, they produce substantial community and environmental benefits such as:

- Increasing the amount of water that filters into the ground, which recharges local and regional aquifers
- Helping protect communities from flooding and drainage problems
- Helping protect streams and lakes from pollutants carried by urban stormwater such as lawn fertilizers and pesticides, motor oil
- Enhancing the beauty of yards and neighborhoods
- Providing valuable habitat for birds, butterflies and many beneficial insects such as bees

When planted with native species, raingardens add diversity to plant life and provide valuable habitat for birds, butterflies, and beneficial insects.
Image credit: Mid-America Regional Council.

Visit the District's Website at www.plslwd.org/home-and-yard
to learn more about raingardens and other beneficial practices you can do at home.

How do Raingardens Work?

When it rains, raingardens receive stormwater from the surrounding area: streets, rooftops, and sidewalks. The gardens fill with a few inches of water during storms and slowly filter water into the ground, preventing water from running off into a storm drain. Compared to a conventional patch of lawn, a raingarden allows about 30% more water to soak into the ground.

It is important to place your raingarden where it will collect the most rainfall or runoff possible. Placing your raingarden downhill from paved surfaces or in an existing low spot in your yard and directing downspouts from your roof towards the raingarden are great ways to capture the most stormwater possible!

Raingardens infiltrate water from surrounding impervious surfaces, and prevent it from entering our lakes.

Photo credit: Emmons and Oliver Resources.

What Plants are Best for a Raingarden?

Native plants are good choices for raingardens, because they tolerate short periods of standing water, are drought tolerant, and their deep roots make it easy for water to move down into the soil. Once established, native plants are also low maintenance and do not require fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides. When choosing which natives are best for your raingarden, consider height, wildlife attraction, flowering, and sun/shade tolerance. Contact the District for help planning a raingarden on your property.

The District offers cost share opportunities for installing certain water quality practices, including raingardens.
Visit www.plslwd.org/cost-share for more information.

Two years after installation, this raingarden is flourishing and helping to improve water quality!

Photo credit: Blue Thumb.

Frequently Asked Questions:

How large does a raingarden need to be?

Raingardens can be many different sizes and shapes. A typical raingarden is designed to have an area about 20% the size of the area draining to it.

Are raingardens a breeding ground for mosquitoes?

No. Mosquitoes need 7-12 days to lay and hatch eggs, which is far less time than it will take for rain water to infiltrate the soil in a raingarden. Mosquitoes are more likely to lay eggs in bird baths than in a properly functioning raingarden.

Do raingardens require a lot of maintenance?

No. Raingardens can be maintained with little effort after the plants are established. Some weeding and watering will be needed in the first two years. Once the plants mature, thinning may become necessary.

Is a raingarden expensive?

It doesn't have to be. The main cost will be purchasing the plants. The District offers financial assistance to help pay for the installation of new raingardens.

How do I get started installing a raingarden on my property?

The District can provide opportunities to receive free technical assistance. You can receive help with any step of the process, from raingarden design and location to plant selection.

PRIOR LAKE - SPRING LAKE
WATERSHED DISTRICT

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Mission: to manage and preserve the water resources of the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District to the best of our ability using input from our communities, sound engineering practices, and our ability to efficiently fund beneficial projects.