



Rain Gardens

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Did you know that stormwater is the greatest threat to our nation's surface water? There are many green solutions to stormwater pollution. One of the most attractive solutions is a rain garden. My mother had never heard of a rain garden before last month, and I enjoyed telling her about these beautiful, pollinator-and-wildlife friendly, low-maintenance gardens.

Rain gardens are depressions in the landscape that receive stormwater runoff and allow the runoff to slowly infiltrate to the groundwater table. They are typically installed in the path of runoff from the roof of a building or home. Rain gardens not only slow down runoff water after a storm, but they also remove some of the pollutants that would otherwise end up in a storm drain. The plants in a rain garden take up the excess nutrients in the runoff water. These gardens are designed to handle flooding conditions for two days at a time and withstand long periods of no rain.

Rain gardens are like any other garden

in that they do need some maintenance. Rain gardens require mulch. Hardwood mulch is recommended, because pine bark mulch is too lightweight and will float after a storm. The plants in your garden should be inspected each season and the rain garden itself should be inspected after major rainfalls to ensure that the plants, soil, and mulch are stable within the garden. Weeding will be necessary a couple of times a year to reduce competition.

There are a few simple tips for installing a rain garden. First, check with PUPS by calling 811 before digging. Most residential rain gardens are between 6 to 12 inches deep. The depth you dig your rain garden depends on your soil type. To help with the shape of your garden, use a garden hose or rope to lay out the shape and size garden you'd like. Keep this outline until you are done digging your boundary. A curved shape makes the rain garden look natural and interesting. The longest side of your rain garden should be perpendicular to the slope of

your property. Don't forget to install the rain garden a safe distance from your septic tank! Most residential rain gardens are not big enough for full-grown trees, so consult your Clemson Extension Horticulture Agent before planting.

My mother was so excited to learn about rain gardens that she added it to my stepfather's "Honey Do List" These wildlife friendly gardens not only enhance your yard, but they also help with stormwater runoff. They make the butterflies happy, too!

For more information on rain gardens and a suitable plant list, visit www.clemson.edu/carolinaclear for a downloadable copy of the Clemson Carolina Clear Rain Garden manual.

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