



Building your rain garden

Location

Raingardens should have water directed to them or be placed nearby a source of storm water. These sources may be from a roof or downspout; driveway, roadway, or parking area; or be in an area of your yard that is seasonally wet. A good way to start, is to observe a rainstorm and track where water is naturally flowing and pooling.

Size

The size of your rain garden depends greatly on the size of your drainage area. The drainage area will determine the amount of water your garden will receive during a storm event. While any treatment is beneficial, rain gardens are most effective when they built to 20-30% the size of the drainage area. An easy way to determine your drainage area is to stake out and measure the areas that are sloped towards the garden. Be sure to include any roofs or other impervious surfaces you are trying to capture water from. Most places can be broken out into simple shapes able to be calculated with the standard length x width = area formula. For larger projects you may want to use online mapping tools to virtually draw out and measure your area.

Soil Type

Another important aspect of your garden is your soil type. What soil you have will determine your infiltration rate and how far you will have to dig your initial basin. A simple test is to dig a hole 6-8" deep and fill it with water, if the water is gone after 12hrs the location is well suited for a rain garden. Rain gardens are usually dug out 12-24" and filled back in with a sandy bioretention soil. If your native soil has a high infiltration rate you do not have to dig out the initial basin as deep. The final basin is created by not filling the top few inches (<6") back in and instead keeping this as the ponding area where stormwater will be captured. Contrary to its name, a rain garden will not be wet most of the time and should allow all water to settle and infiltrate within 48hrs.



Rain garden being implemented to treat parking lot runoff.

