

# *Frequently Asked Questions About* **RAIN GARDENS**

## **What exactly is a rain garden?**

A rain garden is a special kind of landscaping with perennial flowers, shrubs, and/or small trees.

It is attractive – and it has a purpose: to help reduce flooding.

## **How is it different than a flower bed?**

Even though most people won't notice it, the surface of the rain garden is shaped more like a bowl or saucer, as opposed to being flat or mounded like other flower beds. This bowl shape helps it catch rainwater.

The soil in a rain garden also is special – it's a mix that's deep and porous so that water slowly infiltrates into the ground.

## **How big will a rain garden be?**

Rain gardens can be any size, but a good size for an average-size yard is about 10 feet by 20 feet. Often, rain gardens are oval shape.

The specifics of your particular property – existing trees, slope of the yard, location of utility lines, soil type, etc. – will determine the exact size and shape of your rain garden.

## **What plants will be in the rain garden?**

Rain gardens can have whatever plants you like – perennial flowers, small shrubs, small trees, or a combination of all three.

It's best to choose native plants, because they are hardy for our area and require less maintenance.

## **How do I care for a rain garden?**

Basically, not much care is required – some weeding, maybe a little pruning and, if there is no rain, occasional watering.

You also should occasionally add or replace the top layer of shredded bark mulch.

## **How does a rain garden work?**

Some of the water from outside your home that's now going into the storm drain system can go instead to a rain garden.

One easy way to do this is to redirect one of the downspouts from your roof so that the water goes to the rain garden.

In the rain garden, water slowly sinks into the ground and collects in a shallow, unseen trough underneath the plants.

The plants use this water to grow, and any water left over slowly filters into the ground nearby.



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## Is it like a pond?

No. Even though it is called a rain garden, the ground in the garden does not stay wet.

During some storms, a little standing water – maybe a few inches – can collect in a rain garden. However, this water begins to sink into the ground very quickly.

If there is standing water in the garden, it normally will sink into the ground over the course of a few hours. In a very heavy storm, this will take longer, but typically no more than a couple of days.

## Will it create a wet spot in my yard?

No. Water will not spill out of the rain garden and into your yard.

If you have wet spots in your yard now, a rain garden may help reduce them.

## What about mosquitoes?

A rain garden does not breed mosquitoes.

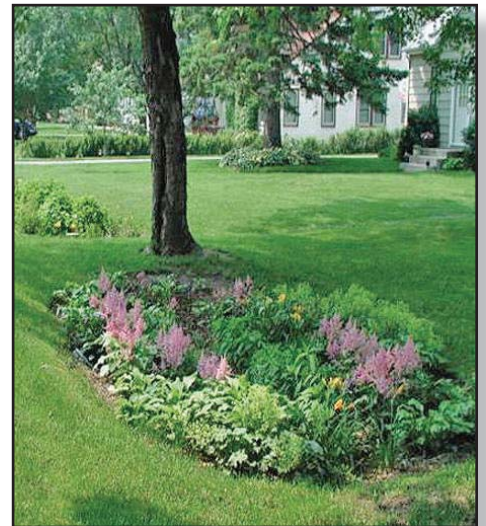
Mosquitoes need 7-12 days to lay and hatch eggs. After most rain storms, any standing water in your rain garden will be gone in just a few hours.

## Will a rain garden make my basement damp?

No. When you carefully locate your rain garden at least 10 feet away from your home, it will not allow the infiltrating water to seep into your foundation.

## Will it make it difficult to mow my yard?

No. You will be able to cut the grass right up to the edge of the rain garden.



## How long will it take to install a rain garden?

An average rain garden will take less than a week to install. Because it requires a fair amount of digging and removing and replacing soil, you may want to consider hiring a contractor.

## How much might it cost to install a rain garden?

An average rain garden might cost about \$5 per square foot if you do all the work yourself; two or three times that if you hire a contractor.

## Where can I get more information about rain gardens?

The Westmoreland Conservation District can help answer your questions and point you to helpful resources.

Westmoreland Conservation District  
218 Donohoe Road  
Greensburg, PA 15601  
724-837-5271 [www.wcdpa.com](http://www.wcdpa.com).