Build a Rain Garden

Do you have a spot in your yard that tends to collect water? Do your downspouts run off into your yard? If so, perhaps you could build a rain garden to capture some of that rainwater runoff. This garden is a low spot that collects and infiltrates rain water using plants adapted to wet and moist soils.

Why Put in a Rain Garden?
- To solve an erosion, runoff or wet spot landscape issue;
- to improve water quality;
- to manage rain water/snow melt close to where it falls;
- to protect water quality in streams and rivers; and
- for beauty and enjoyment.

Install a Rain Garden in 5 Steps

1. Find the Right Location
   - Near sources of stormwater runoff; at the end of a downspout
   - At areas of erosion or saturated soils/wet spots
   - Away from utilities, septic tanks, retaining walls

2. Test Your Soil and Size the Garden
   - Percolation test; rain garden depth = amount of water that infiltrates in 24 hours

3. Design the Garden: Choose Your Plants
   - Maximum depth is 18 inches.
   - Fit the garden into your landscape.
   - Remember, it is a GARDEN!

4. Prepare the Garden Bed
   - Mark out your garden area; remove existing grass or vegetation you are not keeping.
   - Have all utilities marked! Call 800-dig-rite (344-7483) or 811. Fluff up the soil for happy plant roots, double-dig or rototill. Add compost or peat moss for greater infiltration. Avoid lots of walking or heavy equipment on wet soils, especially clay soils!

5. Plant Your Garden
   - Spring to fall is the best time to plant. Set out the plants according to your design. Move them around a bit for the look and spacing you like. Make planting day a family or community event. Water your plants. Protect the plants with shredded mulch.

Caring for Your for Rain Garden

Spring - March and April
- When the weather is warm, rake leaves and other plant material from the rain garden; put this material in a compost pile.
- Pull any weeds starting to come up.
- Replace any dead plants. Divide plants that are getting too big and spread out too much. Plant them in other places in your yard or pass them on to a friend or neighbor.
- Add mulch to the rain garden if needed.

Summer - May to August
- Check your garden every 1-2 weeks. Are the plants growing well? Are weeds and weedy grasses starting to show up in your garden?
- Pull any weeds, like crab grass, from your garden throughout the summer. It is easier to pull the weeds when they are small.
- Water your garden, especially the first 2 years, if St. Joseph becomes dry (no rain for 2-3 weeks) during the hot summer. One inch of water per week is good. Use the water from your rain barrel!

Fall - September to November
- Continue to pull weeds and weedy grasses. They continue to sprout and grow during our nice fall weather. What pests!
- Rake leaves from the rain garden through October so the plants get sunlight and keep growing.
- Leave a layer of leaves for winter protection when November and frosty weather arrives.