What is a rain garden?
A rain garden...
- uses vegetation to slow the flow of stormwater
- has a bowl-shaped dip that holds the rain while it soaks into the ground
- has a ponding area, but is not a pond
- is usually planted in native plants that
  - have an extensive root system to absorb the rain
  - do not need special attention once they are established
- is a rain garden ONLY if stormwater is directed toward it
- can be a beautiful addition to your yard

Why do you want a rain garden?
Your rain garden...
- will clean up stormwater runoff by removing pollution
- is aesthetically pleasing, so it will improve your property
- provides a wildlife habitat for songbirds, butterflies, and other species

How do you make a rain garden?
By following these five steps, you can create your own beautiful rain garden.

1. Choose a site
2. Prepare the soil
3. Select the plants
4. Install the plants
5. Maintain the garden

Choose a site
- Site your garden to take advantage of any existing drainage flow.
- Locate the garden in a low-lying area.
- Ideally, impervious surfaces, such as roofs and driveways, should drain into the low-lying area.

Prepare the soil
- Test the soil’s infiltration.
- Dig an area 6 inches deep for the water to collect.
- Use this soil mix recommended for rain gardens:
  - 50-60% sand
  - 20-30% topsoil
  - 20-30% compost

Select the plants
- Select native species to plant; these are usually available at local nurseries.
- Match plants to the site; for example, plant shade-tolerant plants if your garden is in the shade.
- Choose plants you find attractive.
- Use a variety of plants: groundcovers, perennials, shrubs, and trees.
- Select plants with interesting features, such as beautiful flowers, bright berries, and unusual leaves.

Install the plants
- Carefully remove plants from their pots.
- Gently break up the root ball.
- Place the plant in the soil at the same level it was planted in the pot.
- Water the rain garden thoroughly.
- Apply about 3 inches of shredded hardwood mulch.
Maintain the garden

- If it doesn’t rain after you have planted your garden, water until the plants are established.
- Weed regularly.
- Don’t let sediment or debris flow into the garden and bury the plants.
- Move a plant within the garden if it isn’t doing well.

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- Mulch approximately 3 inches in the spring.

Resources

- NCSU Cooperative Extension, www.ces.ncsu.edu
- www.raingardens.org

Native Plants for the Rain Garden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Botanical Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Type of Plant</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asclepias tuberosa</td>
<td>Butterfly Weed</td>
<td>Perennial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andropogon glomeratus</td>
<td>Bushy Bluestem</td>
<td>Grass</td>
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<tr>
<td>Callicarpa americana</td>
<td>Beautyberry</td>
<td>Small Shrub</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clethra alnifolia</td>
<td>Sweet Pepperbush</td>
<td>Medium Shrub</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cornus sericea</td>
<td>Red Osier Dogwood</td>
<td>Medium Shrub</td>
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<tr>
<td>Echinacea purpurea</td>
<td>Purple Coneflower</td>
<td>Perennial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Euonymus americanus</td>
<td>Strawberry Bush</td>
<td>Small Shrub</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hamamelis virginiana</td>
<td>Witchhazel</td>
<td>Small Tree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helianthus angustifolius</td>
<td>Swamp Sunflower</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lobelia cardinalis</td>
<td>Cardinal Flower</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magnolia virginiana</td>
<td>Sweetbay</td>
<td>Small Evergreen Tree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monarda fistulosa</td>
<td>Beebalm</td>
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<td>Myrica cerifera</td>
<td>Wax Myrtle</td>
<td>Large Evergreen Shrub</td>
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<td>Panicum virgatum</td>
<td>Switchgrass</td>
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<td>Sambucus canadensis</td>
<td>American Elder</td>
<td>Medium Shrub</td>
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<td>Scutellaria integrifolia</td>
<td>Skullcap</td>
<td>Perennial Ground Cover</td>
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<td>Wrinkle Leaf Goldenrod</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spartina bakeri</td>
<td>Cord Grass</td>
<td>Grass</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tradescantia virginiana</td>
<td>Spiderwort</td>
<td>Perennial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>