

# RAIN GARDENS

Did you know that your landscape design can help the environment? The addition of a rain garden can help protect our Chesapeake watershed by controlling storm-water runoff from your home. With my assistance, we can create your own rain garden that will naturally blend in with your landscaping design.

## What is a Rain Garden?

In essence, a rain garden is a bowl-shaped, functional garden that absorbs and captures rainwater. These types of gardens mimic nature by allowing your landscaping design to slow down the flow of rainwater, spread it out and soak into the earth. Even though they have a bowl shape, rain gardens appear flat and include plants native to the Mid-Atlantic that thrive in out moist poor draining clayey soils.

## Rain Garden Benefits

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that about 70 percent of the pollution in the nation's surface water is from storm-water runoff. As water flows through neighborhoods and into drains, it picks up pollutants, garbage, road salt, animal waste, pesticides, automobile oil, fertilizers and other pollutants. So when you incorporate a rain garden in your landscaping design, you help reduce the amount of pollution in our area's lakes, streams and rivers.

Additional benefits of rain gardens include:

- **Flood protection.** A rain garden helps redirect rainwater to prevent flooding around your home.
- **Better water quality.** As the rain garden's plants absorb the storm-water, the plants filter out many toxins so cleaner water goes into the soil.
- **Decreased pest population.** By decreasing the amount of water that pools around your home, you reduce the number of water-loving pests, such as mosquitoes.

## How to Install a Rain Garden in Your Landscaping Design

A rain garden isn't a simple DIY project (unless you're a landscape designer). It takes planning, preparation and, depending on your skill level, the assistance of someone like me! The following are the basic rain garden installation steps I will use.

1. **I'll analyze the topography of your yard.** Take note of any slopes, inclines and depressions so I can determine how water flows.
2. **I'll determine the best place and size.** To prevent damage to your foundation, ideally your rain garden should be at least 10 feet away from your home, as well as 25 feet from a water supply and 15 feet away from your septic system (if applicable.) The ideal area is also in a location that receives full or partial sun so the water can evaporate better.
3. **We'll build the rain garden.** My crews will the garden bed, add amendments (if necessary) to the soil and install native (or very adaptable and acclimated non-native) plants. We may also create trenches or bury drainpipes that carry water from your home's downspout to the rain garden.
4. **We'll add mulch.** We will mulch the bed after plant installation. I usually recommend slow degrading natural mulches such as (in preferred order) cypress, cedar, cocoa shell or

pine straw or permanent mulches such as stone or gravel, which although more expensive to install actually will cost you far less if you plan on staying in your home for 5 or more years.

#### **OTHER ITEMS OF NOTE:**

While the plants are still young, you will need to provide supplemental water during periods of drought we will experience in that first year.

When it rains, you'll notice that your rain garden may look like a pond for a few hours, which is perfect if you've always wanted a house that overlooks water.

Though most natives and adaptable non-natives we'll install are generally deer resistant, keep in mind, Deer are not Rhodes Scholars!! They survive because of their ability to reproduce in large numbers and not by relying on their intellect. As such, though many books have been written discussing the plants that Deer don't like to eat, the problem is that the Deer DON'T READ!! Therefore, they may not know that they don't like certain plants and stupidly munch on them anyway. Deer repellents may be needed. If so call me for suggestions!