

## Brochure purpose

To create rain garden awareness in addition to helping homeowners decide if a rain garden is a stormwater solution for their yard.

Detailed garden information, including construction methods, can be found in the Lake Michigan Coastal Program rain garden manual on the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission website at

[www.in.gov/dnr/lakemich/issues/cpr/program.htm](http://www.in.gov/dnr/lakemich/issues/cpr/program.htm).

## What is a rain garden?

Rain gardens are beautiful landscape features that can help minimize water pollution by managing stormwater on site before it can enter our waterways. They work by slowing down the rush of water from hard surfaces, such as roofs, holding the water for a short period of time, and then allowing it to naturally penetrate into the ground.



Landscape Comparison

	Rain Garden	Common Garden	Average Lawn
Beautiful flowers throughout the year with a variety of plants.	Yes	Yes	NO
Provides habitat for native wildlife such as butterflies.	Yes	Minimal	No
Reduces pollution in our waterways carried by stormwater.	Yes	Minimal	No
Protects our streets from flooding	Yes	Minimal	Minimal
Can survive regional weather conditions such as drought.	Yes	No	No
Increases water infiltration into the soil to recharge groundwater.	Yes	No	No
Purifies our water naturally	Yes	Minimal	No
Reduces mowable land	Yes	Yes	No

Indiana Lake Michigan Coastal Program

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## RAIN GARDENS

beautify your yard  
clean our water



INDIANA  
LAKE MICHIGAN  
COASTAL PROGRAM



**DNR**

Indiana Department of Natural Resources



## Why doesn't grass soak-up rainwater?

Grass lawns are somewhat impervious surfaces, meaning that most water does not seep into the soil like it would under natural conditions. The reason is that grass has a very compact root structure making it difficult for water to penetrate. Instead, it flows over the surface and into your street where it may enter a storm sewer, eventually emptying into a waterway.

### 1 WHY IS URBAN STORMWATER A PROBLEM?

Uncontrolled and untreated stormwater from the urban environment can run off the landscape enter our streams, lakes and ponds and flood our streets. This runoff can include such pollutants as sediments, pathogens, fertilizers, hydrocarbons, and metals. Also, solid and compacted areas including grass, roofs, and pavement increase runoff volumes that rapidly erode our stream banks.

### 2 WHY RAIN GARDENS?

Rain Gardens are an easy way for every homeowner to do their part in maintaining clean water in our communities. They work by providing a buffer between stormwater from your yard and the street. After the water enters the garden, the native plants will soak up some of the water while the remaining will infiltrate into the ground. Both processes filter the water of most pollutants in addition to keeping it out of the street.

### 3 WHERE DO I PLANT A RAIN GARDEN?

- Almost anywhere, but here are some suggestions.
  - Near a downspout
  - In a low area
  - At the base of a slope
  - Front, back or side yard

### 4 HOW DOES A RAIN GARDEN WORK?

As stormwater exits your downspout it will run over your yard and enter the rain garden. A berm will keep the water from exiting the garden. The native plants have a very long root system and maintain a loose soil base. As a result, the water is allowed to infiltrate the soil rather than pond on the surface.

### 5 CONSIDERATIONS

- The rain garden must be greater than 10ft from the building foundation.
- Heavy clay laden soils may need to be amended with a soil mixture to support rain garden plants. See the rain garden manual for a simple soil type test.
- Do not plant over septic systems
- Avoid high traffic areas where soil compaction may occur.
- Plant away from large trees to avoid root systems.
- Try integrating into an existing garden.
- The garden should be twice as long than wide. No wider than 15 feet.

