A Few Common Native Rain Garden Plants

GRASSES
Big Blue Stem (Andropogon gerardii) ~
Bluejoint Grass (Calamagrostis canadensis) ~
Fiddleneck Grass (Gyrostachys stevenii) ~
Indian Grass (Sorghastrum nutans) ~
Little Blue Stem (Schizachyrium scoparium) ~
Prairie Dropseed (Sporobolus heterolepis) ~
Switchgrass (Panicum virgatum) ~
Virginia Wild Rye (Elymus virginicus) ~

SEDGES
Burr Sedge (Carex grayii) ~
Crested Sedge (Carex comans) ~
Fine Sedge (Carex subulata) ~
Franklin’s Sedge (Carex frankii) ~
Pointed Sedge (Carex accurata) ~
Porcupine Sedge (Carex hystericina) ~
Riverbank Tufted Sedge (Carex stricta) ~
Tufted Sedge (Carex stricta) ~
Yellow Sedge (Carex annectans xanthocarpa) ~

TREES
Small (Under 30 Feet)
- Alder (Alnus incana)
- Black Birch (Betula nigra)
- American Beech (Fagus grandifolia)
- American Hornbeam (Carpinus caroliniana)
- Buttonbush (Cephalanthus occidentalis)
- Gray Dogwood (Cornus racemosa)
- Hawthorn Species (Crataegus)
- Paper Birch (Betula papyrifera)
- Red Maple (Acer rubrum)
- Swamp White Oak (Quercus bicolor)
- Sycamore (Platanus occidentalis)

Medium (30 to 50 Feet)
- American Arborvitae (Thuja occidentalis)
- Black Willow (Salix nigra)
- River Birch (Betula nigra)
- Eastern Hemlock (Tsuga canadensis)
- White Pine (Pinus strobus)
- Yellow Birch (Betula alleghaniensis)

Large (50 to 120 Feet)
- Bald Cypress (Taxodium distichum)
- Bur Oak (Quercus macrocarpa)
- Eastern Hickory (Carya floridana)
- Pin Oak (Quercus palustris)
- Red Maple (Acer rubrum)
- Shingle Oak (Quercus imbricaria)
- Swamp White Oak (Quercus bicolor)
- Sycamore (Platanus occidentalis)

SYMBOL KEY
- Areas that may stand in water over 24 hours
- Areas that drain in less than 1 hour after a rain event
- Areas that drain in less than 1 hour after a rain event

Want More Information?
Soil & Water Conservation Districts and County Extension Service in Boone, Brown, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Howard, Marion, Montgomery, and Shelby Counties. To located an office near you, go to: http://www.in.scds.indiana.edu

A Rain Garden is a shallow landscaped area in your yard planted with wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, and other native vegetation.

A Rain Garden collects rain water from your roof, driveway, sidewalks or lawn, and filters it by dissipating the water through soil and plants before it enters a storm drain, pond or stream. Rain Gardens are dry between precipitation events.

A Rain Garden can be your personal contribution to cleaner water and an improved environment!
1 Site Requirements

- The site must be 10 feet from structures (home, shed, patio, etc.) that could be damaged by soil moisture.
- The site cannot be over a septic field.

2 Soil Infiltration

- Dig a hole the size of a coffee can and saturate the soil with water. The best time to complete this activity is late winter to early spring.
- Fill the hole with water and measure the depth, returning in 4 hours to measure again.
- The difference in water depth after 4 hours should be equal to or exceed 1 inch. If the difference is less than 1 inch, seek professional assistance before building your rain garden.

3 Size Calculation

- Measure the area of the impervious surfaces (roof, concrete, patio) that will drain to the rain garden.
- Most rain gardens are about 4 to 8 inches deep.
- For a rain garden that is 6 inches deep, multiply the impervious surface area by 25% to determine the size of your garden.
- Observe your garden after rain events. The garden needs to drain within 48 hours. If it doesn’t, make adjustments to the size, overflow area, density and type of plantings, or the amount of runoff being sent to the garden.

4 Design

- Select the shape and the dimensions that are appropriate for the area you need.
- Select appropriate numbers of native plants for the located site.
- Remember, this is your garden, so pick plants that you find attractive.
- A rock wall or other edging can be used to define the rain garden’s boundaries, but it is important that it is placed in a location that will not interfere with water flow.
- Rain gardens are designed to be dry between storm events. With proper drainage, mosquito larvae will not be a problem.

5 Excavation

- Call 1-800-382-5544 two days before you dig to locate any underground utilities.
- Remove the existing sod or plants.
- Dig a 6 inch depression (or bowl) with a level bottom. Build a small berm opposite the side of water entry using soil excavated from the garden. Allow a low point for water over 6 inches deep to escape.
- Some rain gardens may require a subsurface drain pipe. Consult a professional.
- Adding soil amendments, such as organic matter and/or sand, can improve the drainage, especially in clay soils.

6 Installation and Maintenance

- Plant choice is important for your site. Install recommended rain garden plants (trees, shrubs, sedges, grasses, wildflowers). See back page for ideas.
- Group the same plants together in clumps of at least 3 for best effect.
- Quick draining soil of high organic content. See Step 2.
- Use grasses to help support flowers as they grow taller.
- Install and care for plants as you would in other new landscaping.
- Plants will need to be watered until growth is established. Remember, all plants need water in drought conditions.
- Rain gardens may require weeding until plants are of sufficient size to out-compete weeds. Use a mulch of your choice to keep weeding to a minimum. Be aware that some mulches will float more than others.

** Some sites may require more extensive planning to address topography and drainage. Consult a professional such as a civil engineer or landscape architect. Contact your county’s Soil and Water Conservation District office for additional assistance and/or recommendations for consultants.

Photos courtesy of Jessica Norcross and Williams Creeks Consulting, Inc.