

PROGRAM AREAS

Our work leverages the scientific and technical training and experience of our staff and advisors with the efforts of citizens like you for every aspect of our programs. Our four major program areas are:

RIVER RESTORATION



WILDLIFE PROTECTION



POLICY AND PLANNING



EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



YOUR RIVER NEEDS YOU!

With a community effort, we can restore and maintain a healthy and biologically important river in the heart of one of the fastest growing regions in the U.S.

YOUR SUPPORT IS VITAL TO OUR SUCCESS.

Become a member today and join the hundreds of people dedicated to conserving the Harpeth River.

Please call us or visit our website to become a member and demonstrate your support for a clean, healthy river system for everyone to enjoy.

HARPETH RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION



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RAIN

GARDENS

***A BEAUTIFUL
SOLUTION
TO
STORMWATER
POLLUTION***



HARPETH RIVER
WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION

WHAT IS A RAIN GARDEN?

A rain garden is a shallow area of soil, native plants and mulch that captures rainwater before it enters a storm drain or stream. Rain gardens naturally hold water allowing it to soak into the ground to recharge the ground water supply.

WHY HAVE A RAIN GARDEN?

With the increasing amount of ground covered by roads, parking lots and buildings, gallons of rain flow off the land rather than soaking into the ground. Flowing quickly off the land, the runoff carries pollutants such as oil, grease, antifreeze, fertilizers and pesticides. These “nonpoint” sources of pollution end up in the river causing excess algae growth and harming wildlife. Rain gardens slow the flow of water and naturally filter the pollutants.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT LOCATION

Your rain garden will function best if placed where water naturally collects. If you prefer a different location, redirect the flow of water by using a rain barrel and directing the overflow to your chosen spot or install piping to change the direction of flow. Keep these points in mind when choosing the spot.

- ◆ Stay 10 feet away from house foundations
- ◆ Avoid septic drain fields
- ◆ Avoid planting directly under large trees



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WHAT SIZE RAIN GARDEN DO YOU NEED?

The surface area of the garden should be about 20-30% of the surface (roof or pavement) that drains into the garden. Even a small garden is better than no garden at all.



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GET ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR DIRT

Proper soil is the key that helps your garden to function. Test your soil by digging a hole 8”x 8”. Pour in a bucket of water and watch for the water level to drop at least 1 inch per hour. If your soil doesn’t drain properly, improve it by removing all clay soil and replacing it with a mix of 50% sand and equal parts of topsoil and compost. Even if your soil drains, you should loosen the soil to improve drainage.

DESIGN YOUR GARDEN

There are three zones in a rain garden: very wet, wet to dry and dry. Pay attention to the water needs of your plants to determine the proper placement. Your garden should be shaped like a bowl with a flat bottom and sloping sides. The maximum depth should be about 4-6” deep. Define the shape using a hose or long rope. Dig the garden about 6” deeper than you want your finished product. Amend the excess soil with sand and compost and use it as the planting medium. Keep the sides of the garden rough to promote drainage. Test the drainage by filling the bowl with water. You may find that you need a berm if one side is lower to prevent overflow.

PICK THE PERFECT PLANTS

Choosing the right plants is an important step to a fully functioning rain garden. Pay attention to how much sun/shade your garden receives and choose plants to match the conditions. Those that can tolerate both wet and dry conditions are the best choice.

Here are a few suggestions:

Name	Sun/Shade	Moisture
Swamp Tupelo	Sun	Wet to Dry
White, Willow Oak	Sun	Wet to Dry
Swamp Milkweed	Either	Wet to Dry
Serviceberry	Either	Moist to Dry
Buttonbush	Sun	Wet
Swamp Azalea	Shade	Wet
Swamp Rose	Either	Wet
Cinnamon Fern	Either	Wet
Cardinal Flower	Shade	Wet
River Oats	Either	Moist
Big Blue Lobelia	Shade	Moist
Showy Goldenrod	Sun	Moist
Blue Flag Iris	Sun	Moist



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WILDLIFE VISITORS

Rain gardens are a great source of food for wildlife. Flowers, like the cardinal flower (left), provide food for hummingbirds and butterflies. Not only will your garden be a beautiful addition to your landscape, you’ll attract a variety of birds and insects. By creating

a backyard wildlife habitat that supplies food, water and shelter, your garden will not only prevent pollution from entering the river, it will become a haven for some of nature’s most enchanting creatures.