A Few Common Native Rain Garden Plants

**GRASSES**

- Big Bluestem (Andropogon gerardii)
- Blue-joint Grass (Calamagrostis canadensis)
- Fidel Manna Grass (Glyceria striata)
- Indian Grass (Sorghastrum nutans)
- Little Bluestem (Schizachyrium scoparium)
- Prairie Cordgrass (Spartina pectinata)
- Prairie Dropseed (Sporobolus heterolepis)
- Switchgrass ( Panicum virgatum)
- Virginia Wild Rye (Elymus virginicus)

**WILDFLOWERS (FORBS)**

- Autumn Sneezeweed (Helenium autumnale)
- Blue Flag (Iris virginica)
- Boneset (Eupatorium perfoliatum)
- Bottle Gentian (Gentiana andrewsii)
- Cardinal Flower (Lobelia cardinalis)
- Culver’s Root (Veronicastrum virginicum)
- Dense Blazing Star (Liatris spicata)
- Flat-topped Aster (Aster umbellatus)
- Foxglove Beardtongue (Penstemon digitalis)
- Golden Alexanders (Zizia aurea)
- Golden Ragwort (Senecio aureus)
- Great Blue Lobelia (Lobelia siphilitica)
- Hollow Joe-Pye Weed (Eupatorium fistulosum)
- Marsh Milkweed (Asclepias incarnata)
- Monkeyflower (Mimulus ringens)
- Mountain Mint (Pycnanthemum virginianum)
- New England Aster (Aster novae-angliae)
- Pink Turtlehead (Chelone obliqua)
- Purple Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea)
- Queen of the Prairie (Filipendula rubra)
- Riddell’s Goldenrod (Solidago rigidula)
- Shining Aster (Aster firmus)
- Sherry Black-Eyed Susan (Rudbeckia fulgida)
- Smooth Ironweed (Vernonia fasiculata)
- Smooth Penstemon (Penstemon calycosus)
- Spotted Joe-Pye Weed (Eupatorium maculatum)
- Swamp Aster (Aster puniceus)
- Sweet Black-Eyed Susan (Rudbeckia subtomentosa)
- White Turtlehead (Chelone glabra)
- Wrinkled Goldenrod (Solidago rugosa)

**SEDGES**

- Burr Sedge (Carex grayi)
- Crested Sedge (Carex cristata)
- Fox Sedge (Carex vulpinoidea)
- Franks’s Sedge (Carex franksii)
- Pointed Oval Sedge (Carex tribuloides)
- Porcupine Sedge (Carex hystericina)
- Riverbank Tussock Sedge (Carex emoryi)
- Tussock Sedge (Carex stricta)
- Yellow Fox Sedge (Carex annectans xanthocarpa)

**TREES/SHRUBS**

Small (Under 30 Feet)

- Alder (Alnus incana)
- American Blackbeadnut (Staphylea trifolia)
- American Hornbeam (Carpinus caroliniana)
- Buttonbush (Cephalanthus occidentalis)
- Gray Dogwood (Cornus racemosa)
- Hawthorn Species (Crataegus)
- Pampass (Artemisia trifolia)
- Red-Grasse Dogwood (Cornus sericea)
- Silky Dogwood (Cornus sericea)
- Spicebush (Lindera benzoin)
- Serviceberry (Amelanchier)

Medium (30 to 50 Feet)

- American Arborvitae (Thuja occidentalis)
- American Horbeam (Carpinus caroliniana)
- Black Willow (Salix nigra)
- Buckeye (Aesculus glabra)
- River Birch (Betula nigra)
- Serviceberry (Amelanchier arborea)
- White Birch (Betula papyrifera)

Large (50 to 120 Feet)

- Bald Cypress (Taxodium distichum)
- Bur Oak (Quercus macrocarpa)
- Eastern Hemlock (Tsuga canadensis)
- Pin Oak (Quercus palustris)
- Red Maple (Acer rubrum)
- Shadbush Hickory (Carya laciniosa)
- Swamp White Oak (Quercus bicolor)

**SYMBOL KEY**

- Areas that may stand in water over 24 hours
- Areas that are always dry
- Areas that drain in less than 1 hour after a rain event

Want More Information?

- Soil & Water Conservation District Offices and Purdue Extension Service Offices in Shelby Counties. To located an office near you go to: http://www.swcd.org
- USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service — www.in.nrcs.usda.gov
- Williams Creek Consulting, Inc. — www.williamscreek.net
- Williams Creek Consulting, Inc. — www.williamscreek.com
- Indiana Native Plants & Wildflowers Society — www.inpaws.org
- Spence Restoration Nursery, Inc. — www.spencenursery.com
- Indiana Native Plants & Wildflowers Society — www.inpaws.org

Rain Garden

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

A Rain Garden collects, dissipates the water through soil and plants, and filters rain water from your roof, driveway, sidewalks, and lawn before it enters a storm drain or nearby stream. It is dry between precipitation events.

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

Ideally, your site should be:
- Full to partial sun.
- Quick draining soil of high organic content. See Step 2.
- Close to the source of runoff.
- Flat or bowl-shaped to minimize digging during construction of your garden.
- An existing site where water naturally pools after rain events, but dries up in 24 hours. It can be a site where it receives water from an impervious surface (roof, patio, driveway) by way of a swale or drainage pipe will lead.

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 equal or exceed 1 inch. If the difference is less than 1 inch, seek professional assistance before building your rain garden.
- Indiana has high water tables, so be careful of the placement of the rain garden.

Size Calculation

- Measure the area of the impervious surfaces (roof, concrete, patio) that will drain to the rain garden.
- For a rain garden that is 6 inches deep, multiply the impervious surface area by 25% to determine the size of your garden.
- Most rain gardens are about 4 to 8 inches deep.
- 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.

Native Plant Root Diagram

Some sites may require more extensive planning to address topography and drainage. Consult a professional.

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.
- Use grasses to help support flowers as they grow taller.
- Install and care for plants as you would in other new landscaping.
- Rain gardens may require weeding until plants are of sufficient size to lead.

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.
- Now is the time if you need or want to add organic matter or other amendments to the soil.

Design

- Select the shape and the dimension that are appropriate for the area you need.
- Select appropriate quantities 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.