



# RAIN GARDENS FOR POLLINATORS ON WORKING LAND



## What are rain gardens?

A rain garden is a shallow, vegetated basin that temporarily captures and filters stormwater runoff from hard or compacted surfaces. Planted with native species that tolerate periodic flooding, they use deep roots to increase water absorption and filter contaminants before entering local waterways. Their blooms support pollinators and other wildlife. Rain gardens help control flooding and runoff; on farms they can manage excess water from barns, compacted areas, or access roads, making them a valuable tool for reducing erosion and nutrient loss while enhancing nearby pollinator habitat.

## Components of a Rain Garden

Rain gardens are designed to capture and filter stormwater on site, helping reduce runoff and improve water quality. Each part of the garden plays an important role:

- **Inflow:** The entry point where rainwater from roofs, driveways, or other impervious surfaces is directed into the garden
- **Basin:** The shallow, planted depression that temporarily holds and filters stormwater through soil and plant roots
- **Berm:** A raised edge, often made of soil, on the downhill side of the garden that helps contain and slow the flow of water within the basin
- **Outflow:** A controlled outlet that allows excess water to safely exit the garden once it reaches capacity, preventing erosion or flooding

Together, these components allow rain gardens to manage stormwater naturally while creating habitat for pollinators and other wildlife.



*Rain gardens can come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and can be placed in a location that fits your landscape needs.*

# PLANNING FOR A RAIN GARDEN

## Site and Sizing

Place rain gardens at least 10 feet from buildings and away from utilities, leach fields, and large trees. Install them close to the surface generating runoff; on farms, position them downslope from compacted or nutrient-rich areas. A garden about the size of a parking space is typical near the home, with the option to link multiple gardens for larger flows. While rain gardens can be shaped to suit the landscape (e.g. round, square, or kidney bean, etc.), the size should be based on the soil type, basin depth, and volume of runoff it is intended to hold.

## Depth and Slope

Basin depth is determined by site slope and soil texture. Steeper slopes call for deeper basins, while flatter areas can use shallower ones. Clay soils drain slowly and may need deeper basins; sandy soils drain quickly and allow shallower designs. Rain gardens are not ponds. If properly designed, they should hold water for a maximum of 48 hours. Balancing slope, soil, and depth are important for ensuring the garden functions properly.



*Rain gardens create homes for more than just pollinators, they provide habitat for other wildlife as well!*



## Plant Selection

Rain gardens perform best with regionally native plants that are adapted to wetlands, riparian zones, and wet meadows. Include a mix of native grasses, sedges, and flowering plants to support pollinators and other wildlife year-round. Pollinator Partnership's [Find Your Roots tool](#) can help identify species, and our Partner Biologists can provide tailored recommendations for agricultural landowners and producers.

## Incorporation in Agricultural Systems

Rain gardens are scalable and fit easily into many farming operations, useful near locations like barns, high use areas, and access lanes. Technical and financial assistance programs are available through the USDA to help plan and implement this and many other conservation practices. Contact your local NRCS field office or a Pollinator Partnership Partner Biologist for assistance.



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PARTNERSHIP**

Protect their lives. Preserve ours.

*Scan the QR code above to contact a partner biologist and visit [this page](#) for more detailed information on creating and maintaining a rain garden on your farm.*