



HOW TO PLAN YOUR RAIN GARDEN

PLANNING A RAIN GARDEN

A rain garden is designed to capture, absorb and clean rainwater runoff from roofs and hard surfaces. It's more than a group of native plants. Proper soil preparation and garden design are also critical to success.

Why Plant a Rain Garden?

BENEFITS OF A RAIN GARDEN

- Adds beauty to your landscape
- Keeps water where it falls
 - Captures, absorbs and cleans rainwater before directing it into the ground
 - Recharges our groundwater instead of the storm sewers
 - A properly designed and installed rain garden can collect as much as 30% more runoff than a patch of lawn
 - Other things you can do to help
 - Rain Check Program
- Reduces the risk of basement backups
- Helps prevent water pollution
 - Improving water quality
- Supports and attracts pollinators and songbirds

DESIGNING YOUR RAIN GARDEN

- Plan to minimize maintenance and increase success
 - Rain Gardens: A Guide for Homeowners and Landscapers
- Location, Location, Location
 - Near, but at least 6', preferably 10', away from the house to keep water away from the foundation and to capture mainly roof runoff

- A garden farther from the house needs to be bigger to manage roof runoff and additional water collected from the lawn
- Do not place where water ponds
 - Goal is to get water to drain, not pond
- Do not place over lateral
 - Contact local municipality to locate lateral
 - Keep garden as far from lateral as possible
 - * May only be a couple of feet in small yards
- Avoid trees
 - Creating a garden under trees can damage their roots
 - Disturbing drainage and water flow can negatively impact tree health
 - Harder to dig and plant
- Garden should be level
 - Avoid steep slopes
 - * Steeper the slope, the more digging is required to create a level garden bed
 - ♦ Less than 4% slope - garden 3 to 5" depth
 - ♦ 4 to 7% slope - garden 6 to 7" depth
 - ♦ 8 to 12% slope - garden 8" depth
 - * Soil type also influences garden depth
 - * Drainage is another factor to consider
 - ♦ Test by:
 - Dig hole 1' deep x 1' wide
 - Fill with water and let drain
 - Immediately fill hole with water again
 - Measure drop in water (in inches) after 15 minutes
 - Multiply by 4 to get the hourly infiltration rate
- Avoid septic and well
 - * 5' away from septic
 - * 8' away from well

Fresh Coast Guardians

Fresh Coast Guardians are everyday people who love Lake Michigan and want to protect it.

You can help us prevent polluted storm runoff from reaching our waterways by managing water better when it rains or snows.

Learn more at
freshcoastguardians.com

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[RESOURCE CENTER](https://freshcoastguardians.com)

DESIGN FOR BEAUTY

- Complements your landscape style
 - Formal
 - Straight lines
 - Formal edging material
 - Informal
 - Gentle curves
 - Plants in masses
 - Natural
 - Mimic nature
- **Sample plans**
- Bed
 - Free standing
 - Teardrop, kidney, crescent shaped...
- Maintain several feet of grass, mulched soil or traditional plantings between walks and drives and rain gardens
- Increase impact and extend the garden
 - Connect to traditional garden near house, fence or hedge
- Design bed for easy maintenance
 - For mowing around garden
 - Gentle curves
 - Mowing strips
 - * Pavers or other edging materials
 - Edging slows invasion of weeds and grass
 - Easy access around and within the garden
 - Narrow enough to reach all parts from the border
 - Space between plants to step in and maintain garden
 - Sufficient space around the garden for easy access
- Check views
 - Those looking out windows into garden
 - Don't block windows
 - Those looking from walks, drives and other parts of the landscape
 - Where you can enjoy
 - Maintain visibility
 - To entryway
 - To walkways
 - To traffic
- Be neighborly
 - Inform neighbors of your plans
- Design for function
 - Longest side perpendicular to the slope and water source
 - If possible, long side should be 2 times the short side
 - Water source should be as close to middle of the garden as possible
 - Direct water to garden
 - * With planted or stone swales
 - * Downspout extensions
 - * Buried downspout extension or PVC pipe
 - Berm the side away from the water source
 - Helps reduce the risk or slows water flowing out of the rain garden and into the storm sewer during heavy rainfalls
 - Start small
 - Capture water from one downspout
 - Any well-designed rain garden captures some runoff
 - 100 to 300' is easiest size to install, while still having an impact
 - * Smaller sizes may be more suitable for small city lots
 - * Soil type and garden depth impact garden size

MMSD

The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District's (MMSD) mission is to protect public health and the environment.

MMSD is a regional government agency that provides water reclamation and flood management services for 1.1 million people in 28 communities in the Greater Milwaukee Area.

Learn more at [mmsd.com](https://www.mmsd.com)



- ▶ The larger the garden, the more digging, soil prep and plants needed
 - ▶ Consider installing additional rain gardens over time
 - ▶ Phase in to spread cost, workload and maintenance
 - Evaluate the growing conditions to help with plant selection
 - Sunlight
 - ▶ Full sun
 - * 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight
 - ▶ Part sun
 - * Part shaded for half the day
 - ▶ Shade
 - * Less direct sunlight than part shade
 - * Dappled light all day
 - ▶ Evaluate throughout the day and throughout the year
 - Soil
 - ▶ Most of us have poor soil conditions
 - ▶ Types of soil
 - * Clay
 - ♦ Holds water and nutrients
 - ♦ Often compacted
 - ♦ Poorly draining
 - ♦ Slow to dry
 - * Sand
 - ♦ Doesn't retain water and nutrients as long as clay soil
 - ♦ Fast draining
 - ♦ Dries quickly
 - * Loam
 - ♦ Mix of different soil particles
 - ♦ Holds moisture, yet drains
- ▶ Incorporate organic matter (compost, peat moss, coir...) to improve drainage and increase water-holding ability
 - * Important in all gardens, but especially rain gardens
 - * **How to Create Healthy Soil**
 - Take a soil test
 - Results tell what, if any and how much, fertilizer is needed
 - Other factors to consider
 - Cold hardiness
 - ▶ **Plant Hardiness Zones**
 - ▶ Plant's ability to survive and thrive in the average winter temperatures
 - ▶ Plant's tolerance to summer heat and humidity
 - Deicing salt exposure
 - ▶ **Protect Landscape Plants from Deicing Salts**
 - ▶ Gardens near salted walks, drives and streets
 - ▶ Minimize use
 - * Shovel first
 - * Consider alternatives and plant-friendly deicing salt
 - Select plants with seasonal interest and suited to the growing conditions
- **MMSD Spring Rain Garden Plant Sale**
 - ▶ Place your order now through April 4th - ***Supplies are limited. Once plants SELL OUT, the sale will close***
 - ▶ Pick up plants on June 15th at MMSD's headquarters, 260 W. Seeboth Street, Milwaukee
- **Rain Garden Plant Guide**
 - Winter, spring, summer, fall



About Melinda

Nationally known gardening expert, TV/radio host, author & columnist Melinda Myers has over 30 years of horticulture experience and has written over 20 gardening books, including Can't Miss Small Space Gardening, the Midwest Gardener's Handbook, and Jackson and Perkins' Beautiful Roses Made Easy. She hosts the nationally-syndicated "Melinda's Garden Moment" program airing on over 115 TV and radio stations throughout the U.S. Melinda also hosts the internationally distributed Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series, including the latest Food Gardening for Everyone DVD set. She is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine, writes the twice monthly "Gardeners' Questions" newspaper column and a nationally-distributed gardening column. She appears regularly as a guest expert on national and local television and radio shows.

Visit Melinda's website,
melindamyers.com

- Test your plan
 - Lay out the garden
 - Use rope, hose or similar item to outline the garden bed
 - Adjust location and shape as needed
 - Review and continue adjusting until you achieve the desired results
 - Continue to adjust your plan throughout the process
- Plan ahead for managing excess soil and sod
 - Fill low spots
 - Repair bare spots in the lawn
 - Fix grade next to home's foundation
 - Create raised gardens
 - Compost
 - Share with neighbors

CALL 811 AT LEAST 3 BUSINESS DAYS BEFORE YOU PUT THE FIRST SHOVEL IN THE GROUND

In Wisconsin you can also file an online request at diggershotline.com. Contact this free service at least three business days in advance of digging. Diggers in Wisconsin or your underground utility locating service will contact all the appropriate companies.

These companies will mark the location of their underground utilities in the designated work area. This reduces the danger and inconvenience of accidentally knocking out power, cable or other utilities while creating a beautiful landscape and productive garden.

MISS A WEBINAR?

Melinda's Webinars are Available On Demand!

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UPCOMING APPEARANCES & WEBINARS

Check often as more appearances and webinars continue to be added.

March 6th Webinar

Growing Summer Bulbs in Containers

[More Information](#)

March 7th

Wauwatosa Public Library

Help Plants, Trees, Shrubs and Your Lawn Thrive After Winter!

[More Information](#)

March 27th Webinar

How to Start a Garden for Beginners

April 3rd

Franklin Public Library

Garden Trends

[More Information](#)

March 13th Webinar

Hydrangea Selection, Pruning and Care

April 10th Webinar

Container Gardening Throughout the Year

March 14th Webinar

How to Select Rain Garden Plants

April 11th Webinar

Seven Steps to Managing Water Where It Falls in Your Yard

March 16th Webinar

Gardening to Attract Birds

April 20th

The Why and How of Pruning Hydrangeas and Other Shrubs

[More Information](#)

March 20th Webinar

Maximize the Beauty and Your Enjoyment in Any Small Space

March 23rd

REALTORS Home & Garden Show

Designing with Four Season Foliage -

High Voltage Color Gardens Without the Flowers

Incorporating Native Plants into the Landscape for You and the Pollinators

MORE WEBINARS & APPEARANCES

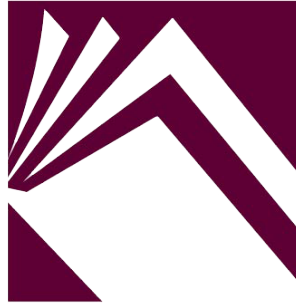


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*Thank You to Fresh Coast Guardians and MMSD for
Sponsoring this Webinar!*



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PUBLIC LIBRARY

Thank You to Milwaukee Public Library for Hosting this Webinar!

Melinda's Garden Moment AUDIO TIPS

Melinda's Garden Moment VIDEO TIPS

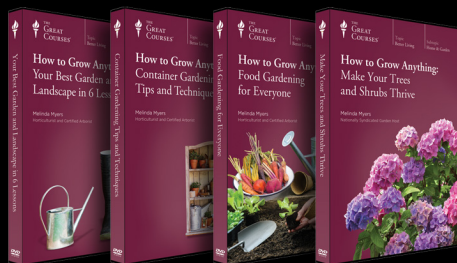
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

MONTHLY GARDENING CHECKLISTS & MORE

BE SURE TO SIGN UP FOR MY E-NEWSLETTER TO GET TIMELY GARDENING TIPS AND A CHANCE TO WIN



melindamyers.com



THE GREAT COURSES "How to Grow Anything"

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BOOKS

Midwest Gardener's Handbook

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Midwest Lawn Guides

Minnesota & Wisconsin Getting Started Garden Guide

Month-by-Month Gardening in Minnesota & Wisconsin

Michigan Getting Started Garden Guide

Month-by-Month Gardening in Michigan

Month-by-Month Gardening in Iowa



Birds & Blooms Magazine

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