

# 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

### **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](https://freshcoastguardians.com)**

**FRESH**  
**COAST**  
**GUARDIANS**

**RESOURCE CENTER**

- 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
- Avoid septic and well
  - 5 feet away from septic
  - 8 feet away from well

## 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](http://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.

## 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

## 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](http://mmsd.com)



- 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
    - 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



### 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](http://melindamyers.com)**

- 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**
- 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 Rain Garden Plant Sale**
    - Place your order now through April 12th - ***Supplies are limited. Once plants SELL OUT, the sale will close***
    - Pick up plants on June 11th at MMSD's headquarters, 260 W. Seeboth Street, Milwaukee
  - **Rain Garden Plant Guide**
  - Winter, spring, summer, fall

Sign up for my  
**FREE**  
Newsletter!

***Get the chance to win  
a seasonal prize!***

**SIGN UP NOW**

- 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

UP  
TO 50% OFF  
RETAIL

2022 Spring Rain Garden Plant Sale

LIMITED SUPPLIES

SHOP NOW

MMSD  
PARTNERS FOR A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT

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COAST  
GUARDIANS  
RESOURCE CENTER

MMSD's spring plant sale is open now with prices on natives up to 50% off retail prices. Not only will you beautify your yard, but you will be doing your part to help attract pollinators and protect our Great Lake. Please keep in mind that **supplies are limited**, so if inventory sells out, the sale will end. To learn more, come to our rain garden webinars, workshops, or visit [freshcoastguardians.com](https://freshcoastguardians.com)

## MISS A WEBINAR?

Melinda's Webinars are Available  
On Demand!

**WATCH NOW**

## UPCOMING APPEARANCES & WEBINARS

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

### March 10<sup>th</sup> Webinar

*Taking Your Veggie Garden to the Next Level*

### March 15<sup>th</sup> Webinar

*How to Select Rain Garden Plants*

### March 16<sup>th</sup> Webinar

*Gardening to Attract Birds*

### March 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>

Lansing Home & Garden Show

*More Information*

### March 24<sup>th</sup> Webinar

*All About Houseplants*

### March 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>

REALTORS Home & Garden Show

*More Information*

### March 31<sup>st</sup> Webinar

*Growing Nutritious Herbs & Vegetables in a Garden or Container*

### April 2<sup>nd</sup>

Siouxland Garden Show

*More Information*

### April 5<sup>th</sup> Webinar

*Managing Water on Your Property*

### April 7<sup>th</sup> Webinar

*Fragrant Plants Sure to Elevate Your Mood and Garden Enjoyment*

**MORE APPEARANCES**

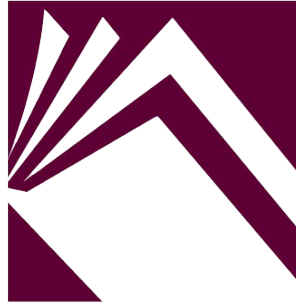


RESOURCE CENTER



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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

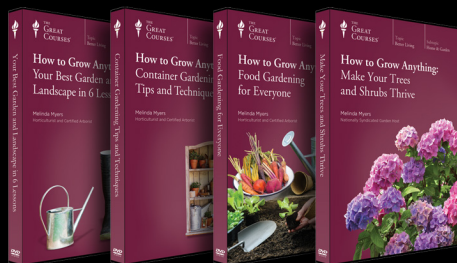
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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"

## DVD SERIES

Food Gardening for Everyone

Make Your Trees and Shrubs Thrive

Your Best Garden and Landscape

Container Tips and Techniques

## BOOKS

Midwest Gardener's Handbook

Small Space Gardening

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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