

# PLANTING YOUR RAIN GARDEN



[melindamyers.com](http://melindamyers.com)



## **PLANTING YOUR RAIN GARDEN**

You've selected the location, purchased your plants and now you are ready to start planting

### **REVIEW THE LOCATION SELECTED**

Is it:

- At least 6, preferably 10, and no more than 30' from the foundation of your home?
- 1 to 2 feet from walks and drives?
- As far from lateral as possible?
- Directing downspout water to garden?

**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 Hotline 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.



### **ADJUST LOCATION AS NEEDED**

- Review your plan
- No plan? Check out some of these preplanned gardens for inspiration
  - [Rain Garden Sample Plans](#)

### **PREPARING THE RAIN GARDEN FOR PLANTING**

- Mark the garden bed with paint
- If time allows, wait and review in a day or two and adjust location as needed
- Edge the garden bed
- Remove the sod
  - Use to fill bare spots in lawn
  - Adjust grade by your house

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



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- Create raised beds - green side down and stacked
  - ◆ **Milorganite** between layers
  - ◆ Cover with plastic to kill weeds
- Compost - green side down
- Share with neighbors if **jumping worms** are not a problem
- Dig garden bed to proper depth based on soil type
  - See chart on page 4 of **WI DNR Rain Garden Guide for Homeowners and Landscapers**
- **Work compost and Milorganite into the top 6 to 12" of soil to improve drainage**
- Check layout of plants
  - Set plants in place according to your design
  - Consider leaving space for access if gardens are large
- No garden design? Try this technique
  - Organize plants by:
    - ◆ Height
    - ◆ Bloom time
    - ◆ Moisture requirements
      - ▶ Set those that like it dry, like butterfly weed, on outer portion
      - ▶ Place those like sedges and Joe Pye weed, that like moisture, towards the center where it stays wet longer
      - ▶ Then consider placing taller ones behind shorter ones to maximize display
      - ▶ Next, look at bloom time - do you want something blooming in every part of the garden throughout the year or sections peaking at different times
  - Adjust plant locations as needed - recheck your design
    - ◆ Much easier to move plants now than once in the ground

## PLANTING

- Work from the center of the garden to outer edge
- Squeeze the container and slide plant out of the pot
- Loosen any circling (girdling) or overcrowded roots
- Set plant at the same depth as it was growing in the container
- Leave tag in place to help you become familiar with the plant
  - Take picture of plant with tag for future reference
- Take picture of the garden now and throughout the season to help you learn to locate and ID plants
  - Important when plants and weeds sprout next spring

## 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)



## **POST PLANTING CARE AND MAINTENANCE**

- Water plants thoroughly at planting
- Check soil moisture every few days
  - Water often enough to keep plant roots moist
- **Gradually extend the time between watering to encourage deep, more drought tolerant roots**
- Monitor soil moisture and water thoroughly when top few inches are dry
- It takes two years for perennials to become established
  - Make sure plants receive sufficient moisture during this time
  - Once established, most rain garden plants will need minimal irrigation
- **Mulch the soil** to:
  - Suppress weeds
  - Conserve moisture
  - Improve the soil as they break down
- Select a mulch:
  - That will stay in place
  - That is certified by Mulch & Soil Council (check label)
    - ◆ Or purchase from a reliable source
      - ▶ Properly managed to minimize the risk of insect, disease and other contaminants
- Watch for weeds and remove as soon as they are found
  - Easier to pull smaller weeds
  - Prevent them from releasing seeds, so you'll be pulling fewer weeds next year
  - Less competition for water and nutrients for your rain garden plants
  - Many weeds harbor insects and disease
- Fall care
  - Take more pictures
    - ◆ Help you locate the good plants to keep in spring
  - Continue weeding
  - Make sure plants receive sufficient water before the ground freezes
  - Leave healthy plants stand for winter
    - ◆ Home for many beneficial insects
    - ◆ Food for songbirds
    - ◆ Helps with ID in the spring



### **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)**

## **UPCOMING WEBINARS**

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

**May 16<sup>th</sup>**

Perennials for Challenging Growing Conditions

**June 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Creative Container Gardening

**June 9<sup>th</sup>**

Sustainable Lawn and Landscape Care

**June 10<sup>th</sup>**

Gardening During the Summer Months

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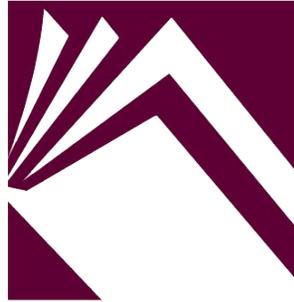


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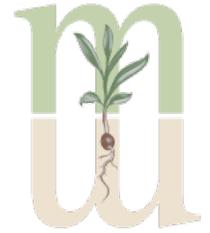
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[melindamyers.com](http://melindamyers.com)

Melinda's Garden Moment nationally syndicated TV and Radio segments

[Birds & Blooms](#) magazine

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](#)
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