

# PLANTING, PLANNING *and* CARING FOR YOUR RAIN GARDEN



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## 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
- Avoid septic and well
  - ♦ 5 feet away from septic
  - ♦ 8 feet 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](https://freshcoastguardians.com)

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# 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
  - Keep rain gardens at least 2' away from walks and drives
  - 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

## 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)





- 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

## PREPARE THE 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

## 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
  - Create raised beds
  - Share with neighbors if jumping worms are not a problem
- Dig garden bed to proper depth based on soil type
  - See chart on page 11 of WI DNR Rain Garden Guide for Homeowners and Landscapers



### 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* released 2022, 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 and Instant Video, 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)**



- Place excess soil on tarp or in wheelbarrows
  - Use to adjust grade by your house
  - Fill and seed bare spots in the lawn
  - Create raised bed gardens
  - Share with others if jumping worms are not a problem
- Work compost and Milorganite into the top 6 to 12" of soil to improve drainage



## PLANT SELECTION

### MMSD RAIN GARDEN PLANT SALE

- Place your order now through March 31<sup>st</sup> - ***Supplies are limited. Once plants SELL OUT, the sale will close.***
- Pick up plants on June 10<sup>th</sup> at MMSD's headquarters, 260 W. Seeboth Street, Milwaukee

### WHAT MAKES A GOOD RAIN GARDEN PLANT?

- Tolerant of wet and dry soil
- Hardy to the climate
  - Plant's ability to thrive in the average minimum winter temperature
- Thrives in existing sunlight
  - Evaluate sun-shade conditions
    - ♦ Throughout the year
    - ♦ Throughout the day
- Sun
  - ♦ Plants that thrive in at least 6-8 hours of direct sunlight
- Partial shade
  - ♦ 3-6 hours of sun
- Shade
  - ♦ Less than 3 hours of direct sun
- Match to soil conditions
- Attract and support birds and pollinators
- Provide beauty and interest year-round
  - Flowers
  - Fall color
  - Seed heads and more
- Grasses
  - Provide support to forbs (flowering plants)
  - Create unity



## 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

**MINIMUM SPACING DISTANCE LISTED WITH EACH PLANT  
HEIGHT MAY VARY WITH GROWING CONDITIONS**

## SUN LOVING RAIN GARDEN PLANTS

### LANCELEAF COREOPSIS

*Coreopsis lanceolata*

- 1-2' tall
- Space 1'
- Long blooming, June - July
- Well-drained to dry soil
- Birds, butterflies and pollinators
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 9

### PURPLE PRAIRIE CLOVER

*Dalea purpurea*

- 1-2' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms July - August
- Clay, loam and sandy soils
- Birds, pollinator host plant
- Tap root helps it adapt, but challenging to move established plants
- Zones 3 to 8

### PURPLE LOVEGRASS

*Eragrostis spectabilis*

- 1-2' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms July - September
- Sandy soil
- Host plant
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 10

### WILD PETUNIA

*Ruellia humilis*

- 1-2' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms June - August
- Loam and sandy soils
- Hummingbird favorite
- Butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Zones 4 to 9

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seasonal prize!***

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### **SWEET GRASS**

*Hierochloe odorata*

- 1-3' tall
- Space 1-2'
- Blooms May - July
- Moist to wet soil
- Fragrant foliage
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 7

### **SHOWY GOLDENROD**

*Solidago speciosa*

- 1-3' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms August - September
- Loam and sandy soils
- Birds, butterflies, pollinators
- Deer resistant
- Not as aggressive as other goldenrods
- Zones 3 to 8

### **BUTTERFLY WEED**

*Asclepias tuberosa*

- 2-3' tall
- Space 12-18"
- Blooms June - August
- Loam and sandy soils
- Hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators
- Monarch host plant
- Deer resistant
- Slow to emerge in spring, so mark the location to avoid accidentally digging up the plants
- Zones 3 to 10

### **SIDEOATS GRAMA**

*Bouteloua curtipendula*

- 2-3' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms August - September
- Loam and sandy soils
- Birds, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 9

### **ROUGH BLAZING STAR**

*Liatris aspera*

- 2-3'
  - Shorter than other blazing stars
- Space 6-12"
- Blooms August - September
- Loam and sandy soils
- Birds, hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 8

### **HOARY VERVAIN**

*Verbena stricta*

- 2-4' tall
- Space 1'
  - Not aggressive
- Blooms July - September
  - 4 to 6 weeks
- Loam and sandy soils
  - Drought resistant
- Hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 8

## **UPCOMING APPEARANCES & WEBINARS**

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

### **March 8<sup>th</sup> Webinar**

*Grow Your Own Flowers for Bouquets in  
Containers, Raised Beds and Gardens*

### **March 11<sup>th</sup>**

University of Illinois Master Gardener's  
Home, Lawn and Garden Day  
[More Information](#)

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

*Create an Oasis On a Deck, Patio or  
Balcony*

### **March 18<sup>th</sup>**

Spring into Gardening  
[More Information](#)

### **March 22<sup>nd</sup> Webinar**

*In a Pot, You Can Grow a Lot!*

### **March 25<sup>th</sup>**

2023 Outagamie Co. Master Gardener  
Association Garden Conference  
[More Information](#)

### **March 29<sup>th</sup> Webinar**

*Understanding Gardening Basics to  
Boost Your Gardening Success*



### **SULLIVANT'S MILKWEED**

*Asclepias sullivantii*

- 3-4' tall
- Space 1'
  - Less aggressive than common milkweed
- Loam, sandy soils, tolerates dry soil
- Full sun
- Fragrant blooms June - August
- Bees, birds, hummingbirds, butterflies, other pollinators, Monarch host plant
- Deer and rabbit resistant
- Zones 4 to 7

### **PALE PURPLE CONEFLOWER**

*Echinacea pallida*

- 3-5' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms June - July
  - Earlier than Purple Coneflower
- Clay, loam and sandy soils
  - Highly adaptable to all but wet, poorly drained soil
- Birds, butterflies, pollinators
- Deer resistant
- Zones 4 to 8

### **EARLY SUNFLOWER**

*Heliopsis helianthoides*

- 3-6' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms June - September
- Clay, loam and sandy soils
  - Tolerates fertile soil
- Birds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 8

### **BLUE VERVAIN**

*Verbena hastata*

- 3-6' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms July - September
  - Up to 2 months
- Clay, loam and sandy soils
  - Moisture lover
- Hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 8

## **FULL SUN TO PART SHADE RAIN GARDEN PLANTS**

### **WILD LUPINE**

*Lupinus perennis*

- 1-2' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms May - June
- Sandy soils
- Hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 8

### **DOTTED MINT**

*Monarda punctata*

- 1-2'
- Space 1'
- Blooms July - September
  - Aromatic
- Gravel and sandy soils
- Pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 10

### **BROWN FOX SEDGE**

*Carex vulpinoidea*

- 1-3' tall
- Space 18"
- Blooms May - June
  - Bronze seed heads
- Clay, loam and sandy soils
  - Tolerates wet soils
- Deer resistant
- Looks similar to Prairie Dropseed
- Zones 3 to 8

### **COMMON YARROW**

*Achillea millefolium*

- **AGGRESSIVE - INVASIVE IN SOME AREAS**
- 1-3' tall
- Space 12-18"
- Blooms June - September
- Well-drained clay, loam and sandy soils
- Butterflies, pollinators
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 9

### **MISTFLOWER**

*Conoclinium coelestinum*

- 1-3' tall
- Space 1'
- Clay, loam, sandy soils
- Blooms July - October
- Birds, pollinators, butterfly garden
- Deer resistant
- Vigorous spreader
- Can be late to emerge
- Zones 5 to 10



### **PALE-LEAVED SUNFLOWER**

*Helianthus decapetalus*

Formerly *Helianthus strumosus*

- 1-3' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms July - August
- Loam, organic, well-drained soils
- Birds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- May be too vigorous for small gardens
- Zones 4 to 9

### **BLACK-EYED SUSAN / GLORIOSA DAISY**

*Rudbeckia hirta*

- 1-3' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms June - September
  - Biennial that self-sows, acting like a perennial
- Clay, loam and sandy soils
- Birds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 10

### **SKY BLUE ASTER**

*Aster azureus*

- Full sun to light shade
- 2-3' tall
- Space 1' apart
- Blue flowers August - October
- Adaptable, mesic-dry, loam and sandy soil
- Birds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Zones 3 to 8

### **TALL ANEMONE**

*Anemone virginiana*

- 2-3' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms May - June
- Loam and sandy soils
- Birds, butterflies, pollinators
- Deer resistant
- Not as aggressive as other anemones
- Zones 2 to 8

### **GREAT BLUE LOBELIA**

*Lobelia siphilitica*

- 1-4' tall
- Space 1'
  - Forms colonies if properly sited
  - Not overly aggressive
- Blooms July - September
- Clay, loam and sandy soils
  - Easier than Cardinal Flower
- Hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 9

### **LEAD PLANT**

*Amorpha canescens*

- 2-3' tall
- Space 2'
  - Takes a few years to mature
  - Do not cut back when young
- Blooms June - July
- Loam and sandy soils
  - Taproot, so very drought tolerant
- Hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 8

### **NEW JERSEY TEA**

*Ceanothus americanus*

- 2-3'
- Space 3'
- Blooms July - August
- Loam and sandy soils
- Hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- **Shrub**
- Zones 3 to 9

### **FOXGLOVE OR SMOOTH PENSTEMON**

*Penstemon digitalis*

- 2-3' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms June - July
  - For a month or longer
- Clay, loam and sandy soils
  - Tolerates clay better than other penstemons
- Birds, hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 8

### **MOUNTAIN MINT**

*Pycnanthemum virginianum*

- 2-3' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms July - September
- Clay, loam and sandy soils
  - Native to moist soils to wet meadows
- Hummingbirds, butterflies
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 7



### **LITTLE BLUESTEM**

*Schizachyrium scoparium*

- 2-3' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms August - October
- Loam and sandy soils
  - Flops in heavy soils
- Birds, butterflies
- Great foliage
  - Blue-green, turning reddish-bronze with tufted seeds
- Zones 3 to 10

### **PRAIRIE DROPSEED**

*Sporobolus heterolepis*

- 2-3' tall
- Space 2'
- Blooms August - September
  - Fragrant flowers
  - Seeds coated with ice look like gems in the garden
- Loam and sandy soils
- Birds, pollinators
- Foliage turns gold in fall
- Zones 3 to 8

### **SHOWY BLACK-EYED SUSAN**

*Rudbeckia fulgida speciosa*

- 18-36" tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms July - October
- Clay, loam, sandy soils
- Bees, birds, butterflies, other pollinators
- Deer and rabbit resistant
- Zones 3 to 8

### **LAVENDER HYSSOP**

*Agastache foeniculum*

- 2-4'
- Space 1'
- Blooms July - September
- Loam and sandy soils
- Hummingbirds, birds, butterflies, pollinators
- Deer resistant
- Zones 2 to 6

### **CARDINAL FLOWER - *Lobelia cardinalis***

- 2-4' tall
- Space 6-12"
- Blooms July - September
- Loam and sandy soils
  - Moist to wet
- Hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Short lived, but self-seeds
- Zones 3 to 9

### **WILD BERGAMOT - *Monarda fistulosa***

- 2-5' tall
- Space 2'
- Blooms July - September
- Clay, loam and sandy soils
- Birds, hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 9

### **PURPLE CONEFLOWER**

*Echinacea purpurea*

- 3-4' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms July - September
  - 2 months or more
- Clay, loam and sandy soils
- Birds, hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators
- Deer resistant
- Zones 4 to 8

### **SNEEZEWEED**

*Helenium autumnal*

- 3-5' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms August - October
- Clay and loam soils
- Birds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Tolerates frequent standing water
- Zones 3 to 8

### **BLUE WILD OR FALSE BLUE INDIGO**

*Baptisia australis*

- 3-5' tall
- Space 2-3'
- Blooms June - July
- Clay, loam, sandy soils
- Attractive seed pods
- Hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Deer and rabbit resistant
- Tap root helps it adapt, but challenging to move established plants
- Zones 3 to 10



### **NEW ENGLAND ASTER**

*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*

- 3-6' tall
- Space 12-18"
- Blooms August - October
- Clay, loam and sandy soils
  - Prefers moist, rich soils
- Birds, butterflies, pollinators
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 7

### **SPOTTED JOE PYE WEED**

*Eutrochium maculatum*

- 4-6' tall
- Space 18-36"
- Blooms August - September
- Clay, loam, sandy soils
- Birds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Zones 3 to 6

### **CUP PLANT**

*Silphium perfoliatum*

- 4-10' tall
- Space 4'
- Blooms July - September
- Clay, loam, sandy soils
- Hummingbirds, birds, butterflies, pollinators
- Extremely aggressive
- Zones 3 to 8

## **SHADE TOLERANT RAIN GARDEN PLANTS**

### **PRAIRIE OVAL SEDGE**

*Carex brevior*

- Sun to shade
- 1-2' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms June - July
- Clay, loam, sandy soils
- Birds
- Deer and rabbit resistant
- Zones 3 to 8

### **FRANK'S SEDGE - BRISTLY CATTAIL SEDE**

*Carex frankii*

- Part to full shade
- 1-2' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms June - August
- Clay, loam, moist soil a must
- Birds, pollinators, host plant
- Zones 3 to 8

### **WILD COLUMBINE**

*Aquilegia canadensis*

- Part shade to sun
- 1-3' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms May - June
- Loam and sandy soils
- Birds, hummingbirds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Reseeds readily
- Zones 3 to 8

### **HEARTLEAF GOLDEN ALEXANDER**

*Zizia aptera*

- Part shade to sun
- 1-3' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms May
- Sandy-clay to sandy soils
- Butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Zones 4 to 8

### **CALICO ASTER**

*Aster lateriflorus*

- Part to full shade
- 2-3' tall
- Blooms September - October
- Clay, loam, sandy soils
- Birds, butterflies, pollinators, host plant
- Zones 4 to 9

### **ZIG ZAG GOLDENROD**

*Solidago flexicaulis*

- Part to full shade
- 1-3' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms August - September
- Clay, loam, sandy soils
- Birds, pollinators, host plant
- Zones 3 to 8



## **BIG LEAF ASTER**

*Aster macrophyllus*

- Part to full shade
- 1-2' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms August - September
- Clay, loam, sandy soils
- Birds, pollinators, host plant
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 7

## **HAIRY WOOD MINT**

*Blephilia hirsuta*

- Part to full shade
- 2-4' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms June - September
- Clay, loam soils
- Bees, pollinators
- Forms dense colonies
- Animal resistant
- Zones 3 to 8

## **VIRGINIA WILD RYE**

*Elymus virginicus*

- Sun to shade
- 4-5' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms July - August
- Clay, loam, sandy soils
- Host plant
- Zones 2 to 9

## **BOTTLEBRUSH GRASS**

*Elymus hystrix*

- Part to full shade
- 2-5' tall
- Space 1'
- Blooms June - August
- Loam, sandy soils
- Deer resistant
- Zones 3 to 7

## **PLANTING**

- Adjust the plan as needed
- 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

## **POST PLANTING CARE AND MAINTENANCE**

### **WATER**

- New plantings when top few inches of soil are dry. Most need one inch of water per week
- Established plants (takes one or two years to become established) only need supplemental water during extended dry periods.
- Always water early in the morning when possible
  - Lose less water to evaporation
  - Reduce risk of disease from wet leaves at night

### **WEEDS**

- Remove weeds as soon as they appear
  - Easier to pull
  - Prevents them from flowering, setting seed and producing more weeds for you to pull next year
  - Many weeds are host to insect and disease problems
  - Throughout the growing season
- Regular weeding makes it easier to differentiate weeds from your rain garden plants
- Watch for and remove invasive plants as soon as they are found
  - Invasive plants are those non-native plants that leave our landscape, invade natural spaces and displace native plants



- Avoid adding weed seeds and grass clippings into the garden
  - Point mower shoot away from the garden when mowing nearby
  - Nitrogen rich grass clippings add unnecessary nutrients to the rain garden
  - Clippings can also interfere with the rain garden's ability to reduce pollutants as water passes through the soil and plant roots
  - Leave clippings on the lawn where they are useful
- Resources
  - [Native Plant Trust](#)
  - [Prairie Seedling Evaluation Guide](#)

## MULCH

- 2" layer of shredded hardwood mulch
  - Suppresses weeds
  - Prevents erosion
  - Prevents compaction that create a hardpan which prevents water infiltration
- Less will be needed as plants grow and spread
- Select a product free of insect, disease and other contaminants
  - [Mulch & Soil Council Certification](#)
  - Ask mulch supplier how the material is managed to avoid these issues

## FERTILIZATION

- At planting application of a low nitrogen, slow-release fertilizer, like Milorganite, can get plants off to a good start
- Once established, plants receive needed nutrients from runoff of lawns and garden
- Stunted plants and pale leaves
  - Take a soil test to see what, if any, nutrients are needed
  - Applying, if needed, a low nitrogen, slow-release fertilizer minimizes the risk of the plants' ability to manage nutrients and pollutants passing through

## CLEAN UP

- Remove leaves and debris
  - From garden and swale leading to the garden
  - Clean gutters as needed
  - Compost organic material removed from garden and gutters
- [Remove and dispose of diseased material from the garden](#)
- Allow healthy plants to stand for winter
  - Increases hardiness
  - Provides homes for beneficial insects
  - Provides seeds for songbirds
  - Adds winter interest
  - Capture snow - keeping it out of the storm sewer

## DON'T PILE SNOW OR DEICING SALT IN RAIN GARDEN

## BE PATIENT

- Small perennial transplants take 3 years to reach maturity and put on an impressive display
- Use larger transplants for quicker results
- I see gardeners adding annuals to their rain gardens

**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.





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



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Melinda's Garden Moment AUDIO TIPS

Melinda's Garden Moment VIDEO TIPS

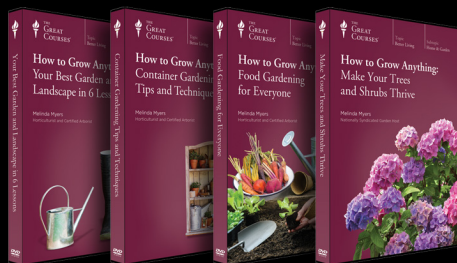
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