

# GARDENING TO IMPROVE OUR ENVIRONMENT

Remember: every drop of rain that stays on your property is one less drop that can carry pollutants to rivers and streams, one less drop that can contribute to flooding, one more drop you can save and reuse for your lawn and garden.

## **What is a rain garden?**

A rain garden is a shallow basin or depression planted with native plants. The native plants have deep roots that allow water to infiltrate into the soil.

## **If rain gardens collect water, don't they encourage mosquitoes?**

Rain gardens are mosquito death raps. Why? While the water stands, mosquitoes lay their eggs. The water drains before the eggs mature into larvae, drying them out and destroying them.

## **What are the benefits of a rain garden and native plants?**

Although it is possible to use certain non-native plants or cultivars in some rain garden projects, the preferred focus is promoting the use of Minnesota native plants.

Native plants add variety and interest to a landscape with hundreds of plants to choose from that are certain to flourish in a variety of soil types and light conditions. It's easy to design a native garden that produces blooms all season long.



**Lawn Chair Landscaping** – Once established, native gardens need very little weeding, watering, mulching or mowing so are virtually maintenance-free.

**Easy on the Wallet** – native plantings eliminate the need for replacement plants, annuals, fertilizers and pesticides. Once established, native plants need no watering, saving thousands of gallons each year.

**Clean Water** – Native plants help clean water. They generally have deep root systems that act as filters to collect dirty run-off from streets and rooftops, and separate out pollutants while absorbing water.

**Control Shoreline Erosion** – Native plants protect shorelines by decreasing erosion. Plants slow down incoming waves and anchor soil on shore.

**Eco-Friendly** – Native aquatic plants produce oxygen for fish and take in phosphorus, reducing mid-summer algae blooms and murky, green lake water.

**Kind to Critters** – Native gardens provide a natural habitat as well as nectar, pollen and seeds for bees, butterflies, birds and other wildlife, while discouraging Canada gees and the mess they leave behind.

The following websites give start-to-finish guidance for landscape projects such as native gardens, rain gardens, and shoreline stabilization, as well as other miscellaneous information.

<http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/partnerships/douglas/raingardens.html>

<http://www.metroblooms.org>

<http://www.fmr.org>

<http://bluethumb.org/raingardens>

<http://cleanwatercampaign.com>