

# RAIN GARDENS

## ► USES: ROOFS, WALKWAYS, DRIVEWAYS, PARKING AREAS



Source: David Hymel



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Source: Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington

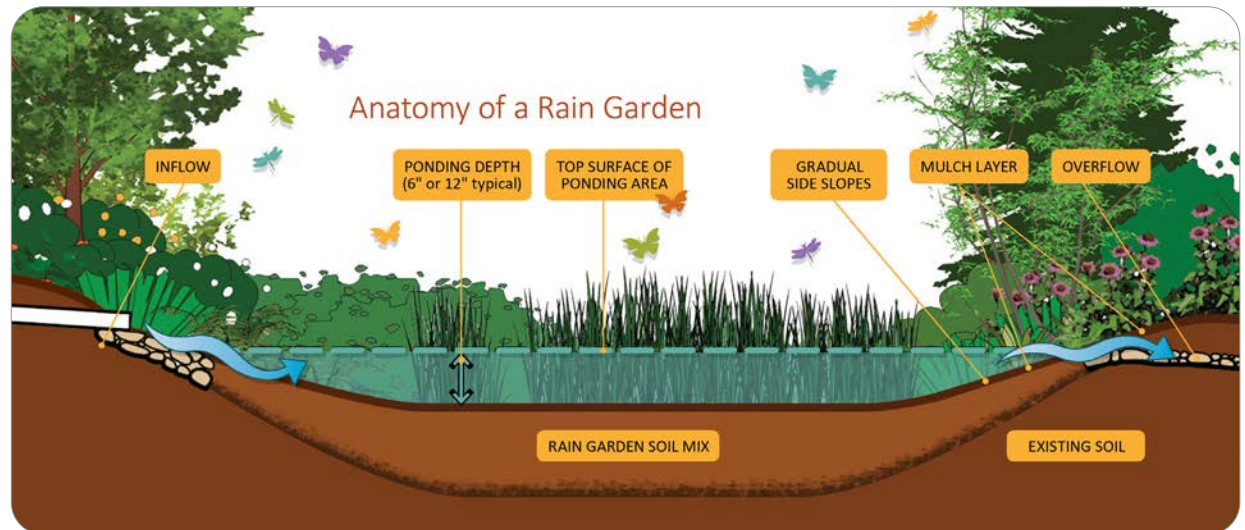
Rain gardens are both beautiful and functional. They allow runoff to **SINK** into the ground and filter out pollution in the process.

A rain garden is a specialized landscape design that captures stormwater runoff from roofs, driveways, or other impervious surfaces and allows water to **SINK** into the ground. It uses plants, mulch and soil to remove pollutants and improve infiltration allowing water to soak into the ground. In soils with low permeability this system may be used to temporarily store water (not completely infiltrate) and remove pollutants before they enter storm drains and waterways.

A rain garden design can be as simple as a shallow depression filled with plants that can flourish in both moist and dry conditions. The required size, shape and depth of the garden depend on how much water you

are trying to capture. For large amounts of runoff or areas with poor infiltration, there are a full spectrum of engineered features, such as specialized soil mixtures, an aggregate (rocky) base and underground drains that you can add. These more complex designs are often referred to as bioretention cells.

For rain gardens to function properly in Snohomish County, it's important to keep in mind: 1) rain gardens are typically dry in summer; 2) in order to work properly, your rain garden must use the proper type of soil mix; and 3) every rain garden design requires an overflow. The Western Washington Rain Garden Handbook is your one-stop guide for all things rain gardens in our area (see [www.RainScaping.info/resources](http://www.RainScaping.info/resources)).



Source: Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington

Plant the center of the garden with species that tolerate wet conditions, such as native sedges and rushes. Around these, put plants suited to occasional standing water. At the furthest edges there are a variety of native evergreen and deciduous shrubs that prefer drier soil. For design and planting recommendations, refer to the current Western Washington Rain Garden Handbook and Low Impact Development Manual (see [www.RainScaping.info/resources](http://www.RainScaping.info/resources)).

They should also be designed to drain within 48 hours to reduce the risk of standing water and mosquito breeding. Rain gardens are a beautiful way to protect your property from erosion and protect the water quality of local creeks. They can enhance the aesthetic value of a site; be used on small parcels of land, easements and right-of-ways; and are easily incorporated into existing landscapes or open space.

### ✓ Maintenance

Routine maintenance is required and can be performed as part of your regular site landscaping program. Weeding and watering are essential in the first two years while plants become established. Annual pruning and mulching are recommended. Keep the pipe outflow and overflow free of debris. Additional watering may be necessary during hot and dry months. The use of native, site-appropriate vegetation reduces the need for fertilizers, pesticides, excessive water and overall maintenance.

## 1 Rain garden under construction.



Source: David Hymel

## 2 Rain garden with planting completed.



Source: David Hymel

## 3 Rain garden with mature plants.



Source: David Hymel

## BEFORE YOU BUILD

To determine if a permit is required for your project, contact [Snohomish County Planning and Development Services \(PDS\)](#) “Ask a Permit Tech” program or call 425-388-3311.

## FINDING A PROFESSIONAL

Before you design and install a rain garden, you may want to consult a professional for design and engineering guidance. Be sure you let them know you want to infiltrate the water on your property.

Remember, you can always contact Snohomish County Conservation & Natural Resources [Surface Water Management \(SWM\)](#) for technical advice (surfacewater@snoco.org or 425-388-3464). See [www.RainScaping.info/resources](http://www.RainScaping.info/resources) for more information.

## DO

- Use Western Washington natives or plants adapted to your particular soil and rainfall conditions.
- Minimize fertilization to prevent water contamination and try organic options.

## DON'T

- Site in soils with high water tables or clay soils without an overflow device.
- Place within 10 feet of your home's foundation.
- Install rain gardens with compost amended soils near lakes, rivers or streams.