

## BMP T5.14 - Rain Gardens

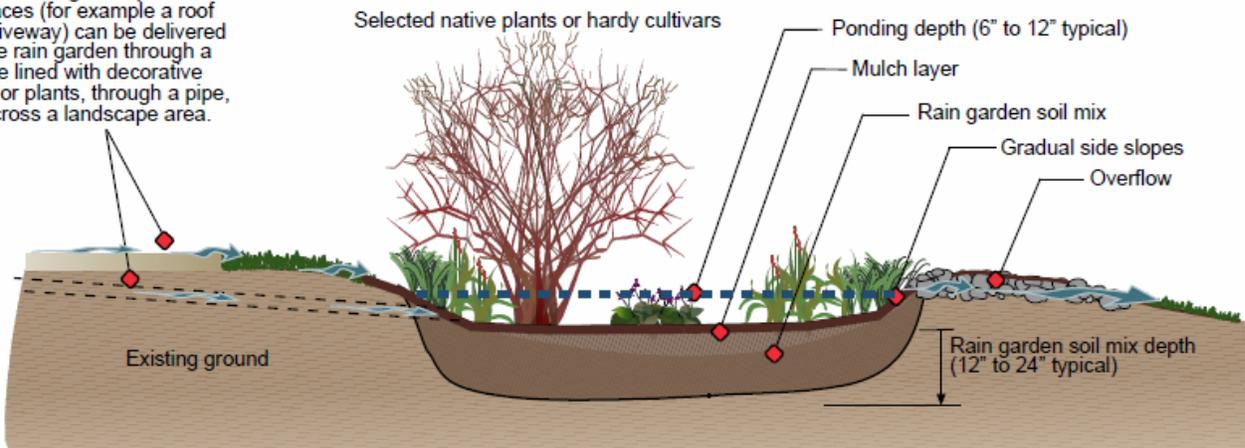
A rain garden is a shallow depression that collects rainwater and is often planted with native plants. The soils in the rain garden let storm water infiltrate into the ground, and the plants in the rain garden help filter out pollutants. They can blend with your existing landscaping, and the design can be formal or informal. Water should dissipate within one or two days; they are not supposed to be permanent water features.



Newly planted Seattle rain garden.

Photo courtesy of Seattle Public Utilities

Water flowing off impervious surfaces (for example a roof or driveway) can be delivered to the rain garden through a swale lined with decorative rock or plants, through a pipe, or across a landscape area.



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While rain gardens are not required to be engineered, constructing a successful rain garden requires a little forethought, information and care. Whether or not a rain garden might be a good choice for a particular location involves the following basic considerations:

A good place for a rain garden is a natural low spot with good drainage.

As a very general rule, a rain garden should be at least 10 percent of the size of the impervious area that is draining to the rain garden. The ratio of the impervious surface to garden area can vary, depending on the depth and drainage capabilities of the underlying soil.

Sometimes the rain garden will overflow, so consider where that overflow water will go when it does.

Don't locate the rain garden:

- Over utilities
- Closer than 5 feet to any property line
- Closer than 50 feet to slopes over 15 percent
- Over a septic system or drain field, or within 50 feet if uphill from a drain field
- Within 10 feet of a retaining wall or basement foundation
- In an area where water already ponds-this indicates poor drainage
- Underneath a canopy of existing trees

If your site seems to be a candidate for a rain garden, consult the *Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington Homeowners* for more detailed information. It is available on this website: <http://raingarden.wsu.edu/>.