

# What is a Rain Garden?

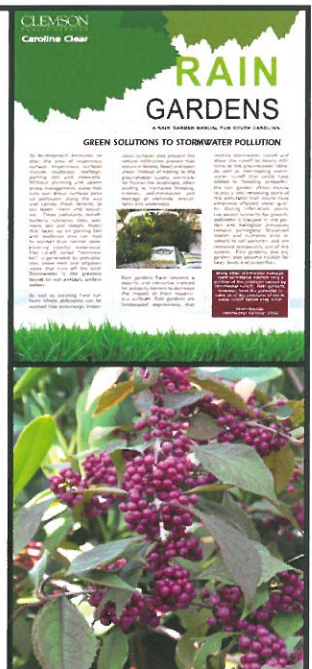
A rain garden is a landscaped depression that intercepts runoff, and allows the water to slowly infiltrate into the groundwater table. As well as intercepting runoff that could possibly add to flooding and stream erosion problems, the rain garden allows nature to play a role in removing pollutants from stormwater runoff that could otherwise affect the water quality of nearby lakes, rivers, and streams. Plants use excess nutrients for growth, sediment gets trapped in the rain garden, and the rain garden becomes a landscaped feature in your yard that is also habitat for bees, butterflies, and birds. Plus, a rain garden uses water from your rooftop and driveway for irrigation, saving you money on your water bill.



There are several steps that need to be taken to properly install a rain garden. In short, the following must be considered:

1. **Where?** A rain garden should be sited in between the source of yard runoff and the place where runoff leaves your yard. A natural depression is best!
2. **How big?** The size of your rain garden will depend on the amount of runoff draining to the location and how quickly your soil can infiltrate the runoff. To find this out, you'll need to calculate the area draining to your rain garden and conduct a perk test to see how quickly water drains in your yard.
3. **What plants to use?** Low-maintenance plants will work best in your rain garden. Look for plants that can tolerate both drought and wet conditions. Examples include spotted geranium, day lilies, asters, swamp azalea, beautyberry, and buttonbush.
4. **What next?** Monitor your rain garden for erosion issues as well as sediment coming into your rain garden. If water is ponding in the garden for more than 48 hours, re-digging your rain garden or amending your soils should be considered.

Clemson's Carolina Clear program has developed a Rain Garden Manual that addresses all of these considerations, plus seven pages of plants per region of the state and illustrated rain garden design ideas. **Download it for FREE** at [www.clemson.edu/carolinaclear](http://www.clemson.edu/carolinaclear), or **purchase it for \$4** per copy through Clemson PSA Publications (IL 87) or at your nearby County Extension office.



[www.clemson.edu/carolinaclear](http://www.clemson.edu/carolinaclear)

*Carolina Clear is a program of Clemson University's Public Service Activities. Information is provided by Faculty and Cooperative Extension Agents. Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer.*