

AN INTRODUCTION TO RAIN GARDENS: What they are & Why They Matter

 Rain gardens offer a low-cost method of improving water quality while preventing flooding and drainage problems. They make good use of rainwater runoff, native perennial flowers and grasses. They also create a habitat for wildlife such as birds and butterflies.

Rain gardens are landscaped areas planted with wild flowers and other native vegetation to replace areas of lawn. During a storm, they fill with a few inches of water and allow the water to gradually filter into the ground rather than running off into storm drains, and eventually basements.

Holding back the runoff helps prevent rainwater from washing off your yard into storm sewers and retention ponds and eventually, into nearby streams and lakes carrying built-up chemicals and pollutants with it.

Rain gardens are low-cost green alternatives to expensive construction projects. Rain gardens are a colorful way for schools, homeowners, businesses and municipalities to help ease individual stormwater problems and at the same time cleanse Illinois' waters.

LT. GOV. PAT QUINN'S GOALS

- 1) To offer schools and communities a low-cost, "green" alternative to major, expensive infrastructure projects designed to improve storm water management.
- 2) To re-introduce native plant, bird and butterfly species into Illinois communities and schools.
- 3) To recreate natural floodplains and restore natural wetlands that once existed along Illinois rivers.
- 4) To provide Illinois teachers an educational tool which has math, science and history applications with a focus on ecology and the environment.
- 5) To teach students about green infrastructure projects and how to implement them in their communities and schools.



BENEFITS OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE In Your Own Community

-  Rain Barrels and Cisterns - Decrease roof runoff and the stress on water treatment plants during storms
-  Swales - A landscaping technique that directs and contains water more efficiently
-  Green Roofs - Rain gardens on top of buildings, they also reduce the "urban heat island" effect and provide native habitat
-  Parking Lot Medians - Replacing impervious concrete with plants decreases runoff
-  Permeable Paving - Fulfills the functions of a fully paved area while leaving fissures to allow for absorption of rain water
-  Natural Landscaping - Native vegetation absorbs runoff more efficiently, holds the soil more firmly with longer roots, and requires less care as it has evolved for survival in its nature environment
-  Detention Basins - Large designs that can contain excessive storm events efficiently
-  Filter Strips - Located next to large impervious surfaces, these strips of vegetation function just like rain gardens to contain runoff
-  Establish New Wetlands - Nature's solution to storm water management is also essential to biodiversity and wildlife survival

ILLINOIS RAIN GARDEN INITIATIVE

As Chairman of the Illinois River Coordinating Council, Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn is responsible for the economic, environmental and recreational viability of the Illinois River watershed and all of its tributaries.

Over time, rapid development within Illinois' watersheds has replaced natural floodplains with concrete and roofs. As a result, many towns have suffered millions of dollars in flood damage, and have spent millions more in ongoing attempts to stop the flooding.

The Illinois Rain Garden Initiative identifies nature's solutions to storm water management.

Improving communities' storm water management by planting rain gardens provides a successful example of how green infrastructure can save communities millions of dollars.

HOW TO GET STARTED

For more helpful information on how to start your rain garden, visit www.RainGarden.il.gov or call 312-814-5220



PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Elgin High School
Elgin

Cove School
Northbrook

White Oak Academy
East St. Louis

Deerfield High School
Deerfield

General John A. Logan Elem. School
Murphysboro

Parkside Elementary School
Lawrenceville

Charleston Middle School
Charleston

Unity Point School
Carbondale



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