



Frequently Asked Questions about Stormwater: Rain Garden FAQs



How big should my rain garden be to benefit the Lake?

Rain gardens should be designed to infiltrate all water that flows into them. Any amount of water that stays on the property instead of running into a storm drain or towards our lakes and rivers help improve water quality. Any sized rain garden will have a positive impact!

How long should water stay in my rain garden?

If designed and installed properly, standing water should infiltrate in 48 hours. Be sure to test your soil type and infiltration rate before designing your rain garden. Some locations may not be suitable for rain gardens due to soil type, high water tables, or bedrock.

Are rain gardens breeding areas for mosquitoes?

No, mosquitoes need 10-14 days of standing water for their breeding cycle. If your rain garden is holding water for that long, it will need to be redesigned. Rain gutters on homes are more likely to produce mosquitoes than a rain garden.

Can the rain gardens be a hazard for small children?

During storms, rain gardens can fill with standing water but is typically no more than 18 inches. This water should be fully infiltrated in a day or so. You can also design your rain garden to empty quicker, reducing this risk. Some place small fences around their rain gardens for further protection.

Can children be a hazard for rain gardens?

Yes! Children playing in rain gardens can compact the soil, reducing the infiltration. They can also damage or kill the plants that are important for filtering the stormwater. Teach your children the importance of water quality and where they should play instead.

Is a rain garden different than my perennial garden?

Yes, rain gardens are bowl shaped where perennial gardens are mounded or flat. This allows for the stormwater to be collected and absorbed. It is specifically designed to collect this stormwater that would otherwise run off your property.

What happens if it doesn't rain and there is a dry period?

Native plants are beneficial in these times, they require less watering due to their deep root structure and can withstand both the wet and dry periods. If there is a long dry period, water the plants just as you would in any garden.



What maintenance is involved?

With native plants, there is much less maintenance than a traditional garden. The native plants do not require fertilizers or pesticides. During the first few years, weeding periodically is needed until the plants are well-established. Once this happens, the plants will out-compete the weeds. During the first two years, or periods of little to no rainfall, watering of the plants will be necessary.

Can I place my rain garden near trees?

If possible, avoid placing rain gardens near mature trees. The roots, seeds, and shade will be challenges to create a functional garden. The roots may force you to move the rain garden. The seeds may force you to continue weeding frequently and the shade need shade-loving plants.

Can I pile snow on my rain garden?

A small amount of snow will be fine; however, a large amount may compact the soils or damage the plants. The large snow pile may also slow the growth of your plants in the spring. If you can, placing the snow next to the rain garden is better. This allows it to infiltrate as it slowly melts.

Will road salt damage my rain garden?

It is better to place your rain garden away from the road salt. There are some salt-tolerant plants that you should use if you cannot change the location. For larger parking or street applications, you should use a pre-treatment structure such as a sediment settling area or an under-drain.

Do rain gardens work in the wintertime?

They are less effective because the plants are dormant. The rain garden will still slow down water and allow it to pond if the ground is still frozen. This keeps the water on your property instead of running off. Water may remain longer due to this, but it is not a problem in the winter.

Should I locate the rain garden in the sun or shade?

The sun allows for the best drainage for rain gardens. If you choose to place it in the shade, ensure that you choose plants suited to less light. The water will take longer to be absorbed in the shade, but it will still function correctly.

Additional Resources

https://clearchoicescleanwater.org/uploads/88/docs/6038/raingarden_FAQs.pdf

http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@publicworks/documentswebcontentconvert_253666.pdf

