

R A I N G A R D E N S

You can make an important contribution to reduce the amount of stormwater and pollutants coming from your property by incorporating rain gardens into your yard.

Native Soil and Forests of Western Washington store, filter, and slowly release cool, clean water to streams, wetlands, and the largest estuary on the west coast—Puget Sound. The rich diversity of life in marine and fresh water, as well as on land, depends on clean water to thrive.



As the region grows, native forests and soils are replaced with roads, rooftops and other hard surfaces. When it rains or snows, more water flows from these surfaces than undisturbed areas, carrying oil, fertilizers, pesticides, sediment and other pollutants downstream. In fact, much of the pollution in streams, wetlands and Puget Sound now comes from stormwater (water flowing off developed areas). The added volume of water and associated contaminants from developed land are damaging water resources and harming aquatic life in western Washington.



WHAT IS A RAIN GARDEN?

A rain garden acts like a native forest by collecting, absorbing, and filtering stormwater runoff from roof tops, driveways, patios, and other areas that don't allow water to soak in. Rain gardens are designed as shallow depressions that:

- ◆ Can be shaped and sized to fit your yard.
- ◆ Are constructed with soil mixes that allow water to soak in rapidly and support healthy plant growth.
- ◆ Can be landscaped with a variety of plants to fit the surroundings.

Rain gardens are one of the most versatile and effective tools in a new approach to managing stormwater called low impact development (LID). An LID project may incorporate several tools to soak up rain water, reduce stormwater runoff, and filter pollutants. Some examples of these tools include permeable paving, compost-amended soils, vegetated roofs, rainwater collection systems and rain gardens.

Rain gardens provide multiple benefits, including:



Filter oil and grease from driveways, pesticides and fertilizers from lawns, and other pollutants before they reach the storm drain and eventually streams, wetlands, lakes and marine waters.



Reduce flooding on neighboring property, overflow in sewers, and erosion in streams by absorbing water from impervious surfaces.



Provide habitat for beneficial insects and birds.



Increase the amount of water that soaks into the ground to recharge local groundwater.

Anatomy of a rain garden

