



What is a rainwater garden?

A shallow depression dug in the ground that captures rainwater and snowmelt running off hard surfaces



Parking lot rainwater garden



Replenish
Groundwater Supply

Enhance
Urban Ecology

Improve
Water Quality

Rainwater Gardens

Enhance your property and collect vital water

Gardens Inspired by Nature

In natural systems, rain and snowmelt naturally soaks into the ground supplying water to vegetation and recharging groundwater. In urban areas this process is blocked by hard surfaces such as roofs, driveways, roads, and parking lots. Stormwater runs off these surfaces down storm sewers and directly into lakes and streams where it pollutes water and damages shorelines.

Creating a rainwater garden is a way of reclaiming stormwater that runs off hard surfaces. As rainwater soaks into a garden, it benefits the landscape rather than negatively impacting a local water body.



Why install a rainwater garden?

- Improve water quality in Minnesota's lakes, streams, and rivers
- Create a beautiful garden that benefits nature
- Attract birds, butterflies, and beneficial insects

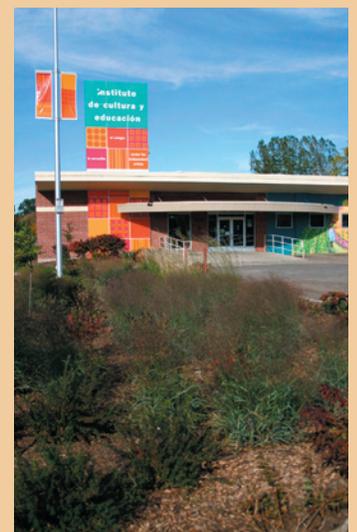
Simply Beautiful

Whether you create one rainwater garden in your yard or multiple gardens as part of an entire neighborhood project, you'll be making your property a more attractive and valuable place to live.

But, rainwater gardens aren't just for homeowners. Many businesses are now installing rainwater gardens in parking lots and near building entrances not only to enhance the aesthetics of the workplace, but also to reflect environmental ethics.



Burnsville residence, Rushmore Avenue



School yard



University of Minnesota, St. Paul campus



St. Paul residence



Burnsville residence, Rushmore Avenue



Limestone structure guides water into the garden



Science Museum of Minnesota

Planning & Design

Location—For rainwater gardens to function properly, they should be located near hard surfaces or down spouts where they can collect stormwater runoff. They must also be built where soils are porous enough to infiltrate stormwater. For example, water will readily soak into sandy soils; however, it is more challenging to build an effective rainwater garden in clay soils. Rainwater gardens should be located at least 20 feet from a foundation, and ideally near the street. Look for the lowest point in your yard. This is where water naturally flows and the best place for a rainwater garden.

Plant choices—Hardy plants and shrubs will thrive in rainwater gardens. Depending on the location of and soils in your rainwater garden, plants such as Joe Pye weed, Siberian iris, and tussock sedge are excellent choices for the wet bottom of the garden. On the drier edges and side slopes, drought-tolerant species such as little bluestem, sedum 'Autumn Joy,' and lamb's ear will be more successful.

Design basics—Rainwater gardens should be designed to hold about 12 inches of water. Gradual side slopes (not steep side slopes) are recommended to prevent erosion.

Stone retaining walls and a crisp lawn edge will keep a garden looking neat and visually appealing. Place edging between the garden and surrounding lawn to reduce maintenance.



Gardens in Action

Rainwater gardens are being installed by homeowners, cities, schools, churches, and private businesses. If you would like to learn more, please visit the rainwater garden links available on the City of Burnsville's website.



University of Minnesota, St. Paul campus