

# Building a Simple Rain Garden

by the ECOLOGY ACTION CENTER



## Materials

- Tape measure & something to mark the pit (garden hose, 40' string, spray paint, etc.).
- 24 plants, based on your chosen theme.
- Wheelbarrow (optional). Free from the Bloomington Tool Library.
- 10 large bags of wood chips or mulch. Free from the Town of Normal at 1301 Warriner St.
- Round point shovel and/or nursery spade. Free from the Bloomington Tool Library [thetoollib.com](http://thetoollib.com)).

## Choosing a Location

### Location Requirements:

- Downhill from the house.
- At least 10' from the house.
- Call 811 to ensure the area is safe for digging.
- Directly out from the downspout (optional).
- Some plants prefer sun, others prefer shade.
- Is your location Sunny or Shady?

## Choosing a Theme

### If you have a sunny area:

#### Native:

- 1 Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)
- 5 Black eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia fulgida*)
- 3 Northern Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

#### Non-Native:

- 1 Itea 'Little Henry' shrub
- 5 Obedient Plant Miss Manners
- 3 Missouri Primrose (*Oenothera macrocarpa*)

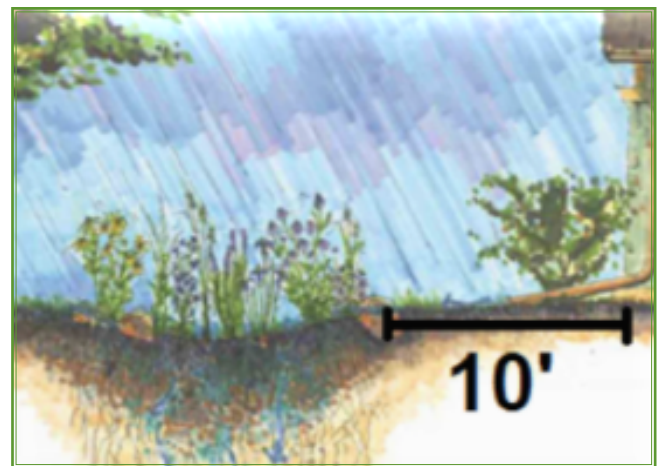
### If you have a shaded area:

#### Native:

- 1 Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)
- 5 Early Meadow Rue (*Thalictrum dioicum*)
- 3 Wild petunia (*Ruellia humilis*)

#### Non-Native:

- 1 'Incredibal' hydrangea
- 5 'Francee' Hosta
- 3 'Jack Forst' Brunnera



## Getting Plants

Obtain 9 plants based on the theme chosen. Feel free to adjust the amounts if you prefer certain plants, or to mix and match within each environment (sunny or shaded).

- Buy from a store.
- Get from a friend or neighbor.
- Participate in a plant swap.
- Large plants (gallon-size instead of quart-size) are recommended so there are fewer to plant and maintain; also they are hardier.
- McLean County FreeCycle ([groups.freecycle.org/McFreecycle](http://groups.freecycle.org/McFreecycle))

**For tips on chemical-free gardening & more, visit [yardsmart.org](http://yardsmart.org).**

# Building a Simple Rain Garden

continued

## Marking the Location

- Measure a 10' by 10' square area.
- Mark the 40' perimeter with a garden hose, rocks, string, spray paint, etc.
- Shapes with extreme edges are difficult to mow around; a square, rectangle, oval, or kidney bean shape is easy to mow around.



**Keep it simple**  
for easy mowing!

## Digging the Garden

- Dig the pit 2.5' deep. Slope the edges so the pit doesn't collapse.
- Round point spades are good for digging.
- Nursery spades are helpful if you want to save the sod layer. They are also good at making clean edges on your hole.
- Fill the pit with wood chips.
- Avoiding the center, set the pots in the garden to decide placement.
- When planting, leave the center without plants.
- If you are planting directly out from a downspout, leave that path without plants too.

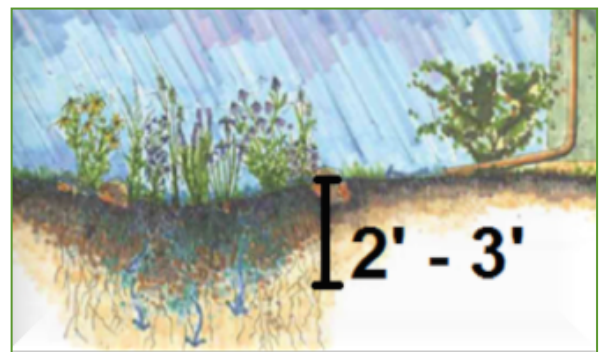
**Round Spades**  
are good for  
digging.



**Nursery Spades**  
save the sod layer.

## Maintenance!

- For the first year, water the plants weekly so they can get established.
- Pull weeds! Check out [yardsmart.org](http://yardsmart.org) for more tips.



For tips on chemical-free  
gardening & more, visit  
**[yardsmart.org](http://yardsmart.org)**.

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