

Rain Gardens

What are rain gardens?

Rain gardens are planted shallow depressions, 6-12 inches deep, that collect, filter, and absorb rainwater from roofs, driveways, sidewalks, and patios. They have compost-amended soils 12-24 inches deep to support plant growth and help rain water soak into the ground. They can be landscaped with a variety of plants suitable for the sun exposure, soil, and moisture conditions.

What are the benefits of rain gardens?

Rain gardens slow and filter polluted runoff, minimize drainage problems and flooding, and recharge groundwater. It also protects the water quality in streams and Puget Sound waterways. They are also a beautiful landscape additions that attract birds and butterflies to your garden.



Where can rain gardens be used in Jefferson County?

Rain gardens should not be installed in areas where soaking rain water into the ground could pose a hazard, such as in areas with steep slopes, erosion or landslide hazards, poorly infiltrating soils, contaminated soils, or shallow groundwater. Critical areas maps showing locations in Jefferson County that are affected by these conditions are available online. Consult a civil or geotechnical engineer if in doubt.

Helpful Resources

“Building a Rain Garden in the Pacific Northwest”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=9Kti4HJ45BM

Jefferson County Critical Areas maps

<http://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/idms/mapserver.shtml>

Puget Sound Partnership—Stormwater & Low Impact Development (LID)

<http://www.psp.wa.gov/stormwater.php>

Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington Homeowners

by Curtis Hinman

Rain Gardens: Managing Water Sustainably in the Garden and Designed Landscape

by Nigel Dunnett and Andy Clayden

Rain Gardens: Sustainable Landscaping for a Beautiful Yard and a Healthy World.



Jefferson County

Department of Community Development

621 Sheridan Street Port Townsend, WA 98368

phone: 360.379.4450

fax: 360.379.4451

e-mail: dcd@co.jefferson.wa.us



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Image: Good Nature Publishing

Rain gardens are one method of low impact development (LID) used to effectively manage stormwater runoff.

Four Steps to Installing a Rain Garden

1) Locate

Identify the areas on your property draining to the rain garden in order to find the best location. Test the soil, and determine how the water will be routed to the rain garden, such as by a pipe or rock-lined ditch. Also, consider how it will fit into and enhance the appearance of your existing landscape.

2) Design and Build

Determine the size and shape of the rain garden. Excavate the soil 18-30 inches deep. Level the bottom of the rain garden. Place the layer of amended soil mix, leaving at least six inches depth for ponding. Level the soil surface, and create an inflow with a pipe or rock-lined ditch.

3) Plant

Use a variety of small trees, shrubs, perennials, or grasses. Select plants that enhance the area and have appropriate water needs. Native plants, hardy cultivars, and non-invasive plants are recommended. Plant, and water well to establish the plants. Apply a 2-3 inch layer of mulch after plant installation.

4) Maintain

Water regularly for the first 1-3 years until plants are established. Replenish mulch annually to minimize weeds and conserve soil moisture. Weed in the spring, summer, and fall. Keep the inlet area well protected with rock and clear of debris. Do not apply fertilizer, herbicides, or pesticides.

Where can a rain garden be added to your landscape?

Areas downslope from roof downspouts, driveways, sidewalks, patios, and other paved areas are suitable locations for a rain garden. The site should have a slope of less than 5% , or a one foot drop for every 20 feet. Avoid areas with underground utilities or large tree roots. Set back rain gardens at least five feet from any building. Locate at least ten feet from a building with a basement.

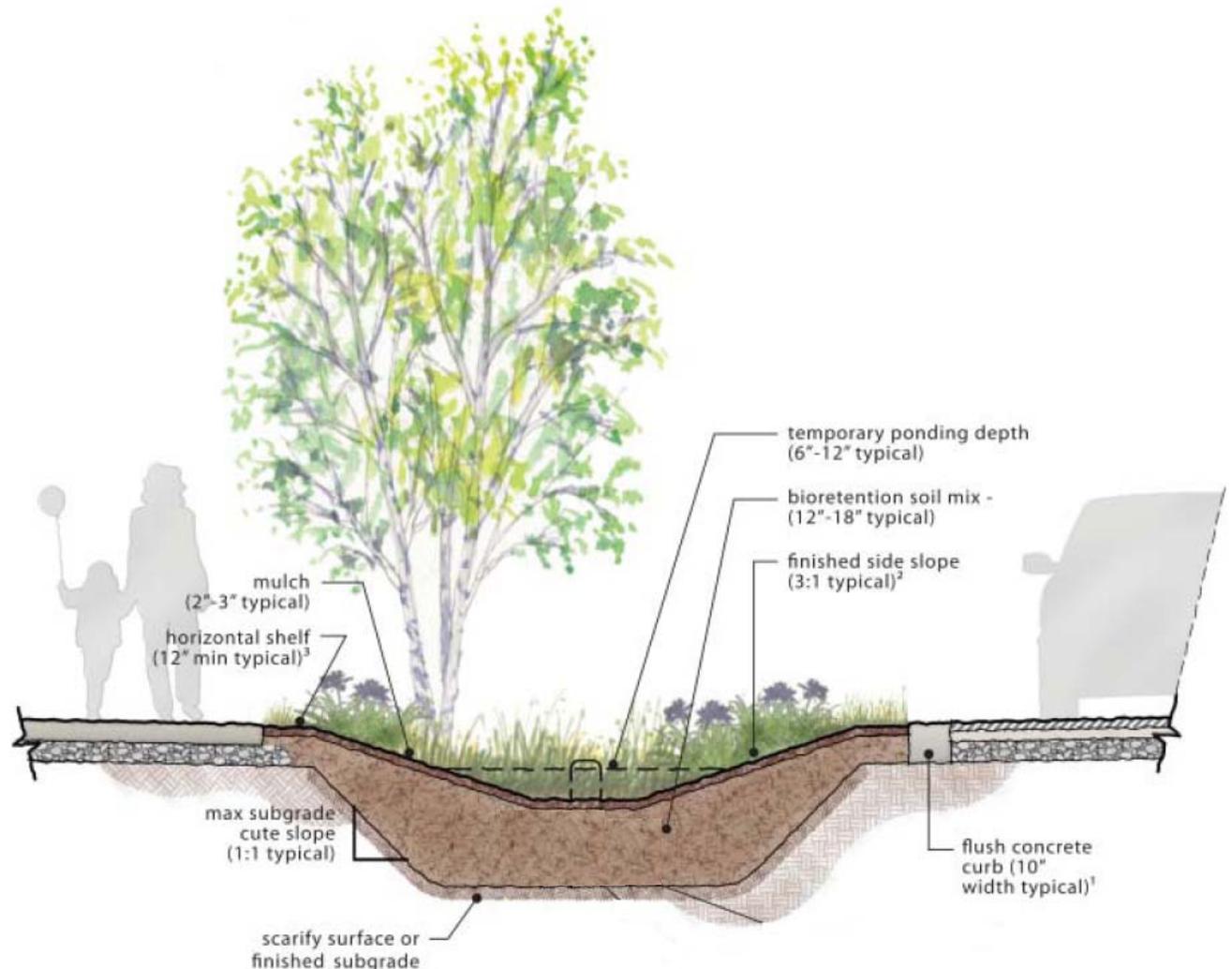


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