

What is a rain garden?

A rain garden can be a shallow depression in free-draining soil planted with water tolerant plants. As surface water passes through the soil, silt settles out and the surface water is allowed to infiltrate into the ground.

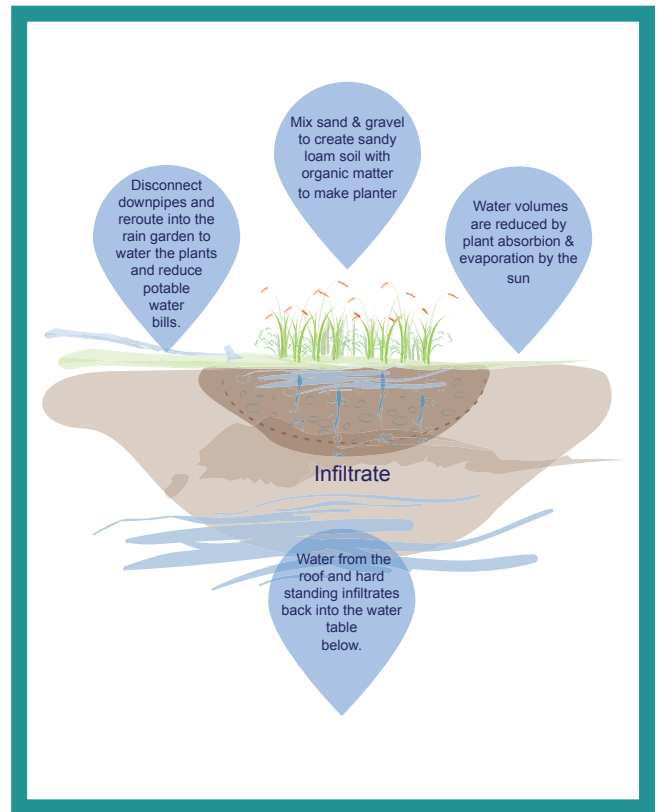
Rain gardens typically have an overflow to allow excess rainfall to be safely routed away from homes or other sensitive areas.

When might I use a rain garden?

Rain gardens are ideal where the gardens are downhill of a property and its driveway in areas where the ground is relatively free draining.

What do I need to consider for my rain garden?

- You need to consider where water will go should the rain garden overflow; you will need to allow for an overflow directed towards a soakaway, stream or surface water sewer. Discharging from the rain garden into a combined sewer may not qualify you for funding or a reduction in water bills.
- There are simple tests (see UK Rain Garden Guide) which can be used to check whether your garden is free-draining and to see if the permeability needs improvement.
- The larger the rain garden the less often it will overflow and the less waterlogged it will become. An annual summer storm in the South West will typically have 11mm of rainfall. You can multiply your roof area by 11mm to see what volume in litres your rain garden would need to retain all the flow.
- A rain garden should be situated at least 5m from any building foundations. Also you should consider whether the ground might be adversely affected by increases in the flow of water into the ground (for example soluble material such as chalk). Further information on this is described in the Susdrain and Ciria factsheet 'Using SuDS close to buildings'. The link is provided below.



- Rain gardens are best suited on gentle slopes. On steeper slopes it can be difficult to create a level perimeter to retain water.
- You should avoid locating rain gardens too close to trees as it may cause problems with shading and tree roots.

What will I need to do to maintain my rain garden?

Maintenance of a rain garden differs very little from general garden maintenance. Ensure that the flow path is free flowing and maintain the plant bed as you wish.

Sources of further information

Information on designing, constructing and maintaining rain gardens can be found at:

- raingardens.info – Rain Garden Guide
- susdrain.org – Rain Gardens page
- rspb.org.uk – Sustainable drainage systems; Maximising the potential for people and wildlife