

Rain Garden Frequently Asked Questions

Why are you giving away free rain gardens?

Because rain gardens help to reduce flooding...and flooding has been a problem in and around Ramsay Terrace.

Rain gardens also have other good qualities. They reduce pollution in our streams. And they make our homes and neighborhoods more attractive.

Where does the money for the free rain garden program come from?

Mount Pleasant Borough has received a grant* to design, install, and landscape up to 40 rain gardens in and around Ramsay Terrace with other locations possible at a later time.

What exactly is a rain garden?

A rain garden is a special kind of landscaping with perennial flowers, shrubs, and/or small trees.

It is attractive – and it has a purpose: to help reduce flooding.

How does it work?

Some of the rain water from outside your home that's now going into the storm drain system will go instead to the rain garden.

One easy way to do this is to redirect one of the downspouts from your roof so that the water goes to the rain garden.

In the rain garden, water slowly sinks into the ground and collects in a shallow, unseen trough underneath the plants.

The plants use this water to grow, and any water left over slowly filters into the ground nearby.

Is it like a pond?

No. Even though it is called a rain garden, the ground in the garden does not stay wet.

During some storms, a little standing water – maybe a few inches – can collect in a rain garden. However, this water begins to sink into the ground very quickly.

If there is standing water in the garden, it normally will sink into the ground over the course of a few hours. In a very heavy storm, this will take longer, but typically no more than a couple of days.

Will it create a wet spot in my yard?

No. Water will not spill out of the rain garden and into your yard.

If you have wet spots in your yard now, a rain garden may help reduce them.

What about mosquitoes?

A rain garden does not breed mosquitoes.

Mosquitoes need 7-12 days to lay and hatch eggs. After most rain storms, any standing water in your rain garden will be gone in just a few hours.

Will a rain garden make my basement damp?

No. We will carefully locate your rain garden to be sure that it doesn't allow the infiltrating water to seep into your foundation.

Will it make it difficult to mow my yard?

No. You will be able to cut the grass right up to the edge of the rain garden.

How big will the rain garden be?

The average size will be about 10 feet by 20 feet, and most likely it will be an oval shape.

The specifics of your particular property – existing trees, slope of the yard, location of utility lines, soil type, etc. – will determine the exact size and shape of your rain garden.

What plants will be in the rain garden?

The Westmoreland Conservation District is coordinating the design, installation, and landscaping of the rain gardens.

The Conservation District has several different garden designs, and the plants in each have been chosen so that they complement each other and create a visually pleasing garden.

Most gardens will have a combination of perennial flowers, small shrubs, and/or small trees – all of which are hardy in our area.

How do I care for the rain garden?

Basically, not much care is required – some weeding, maybe a little pruning and, if there is no rain, occasional watering.

What if I don't know a weed from a flower or how to tend the plants in the rain garden?

If you have a rain garden, you also will receive information on how to care for it. But, as stated in the previous answer, not much care is required.

A person will be available during construction of the rain garden to answer any questions you might have. Afterward, the Westmoreland Conservation District has a landscape architect on staff who can help you.

What if the plants in my rain garden die?

Plants in the rain garden should do well, and will be guaranteed for a period of time against natural problems.

However, if they should fall victim to some natural cause during this guarantee period, and need to be replaced, they will be replaced at no cost to you.

When will the rain gardens be installed?

Installation of the rain gardens is scheduled to start in early summer, 2010.

How long will it take?

An average rain garden will take about a week to install.

What do I have to do to get a rain garden?

Fill out the enclosed "Interest Form" and return it to the Westmoreland Conservation District no later than Monday, March 15.

Once the Conservation District receives your form, a representative will contact you and make arrangements to come to your home to look at your yard.

During this visit, he will discuss the program with you and evaluate whether or not your property is suitable for a rain garden.

Funds for this free rain garden program are limited, so the locations of the gardens will be determined on a first-come, first-served basis to those residents of Ramsay Terrace and nearby streets who meet the conditions of the program.

**Funding for the rain gardens is being provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection through Section 319 of the Federal Clean Water Act administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Richard King Mellon Foundation is providing funding for the public information meetings and outreach.*