KitsapCounty
Community Development

Residential Rain Garden

A rain garden is a shallow landscaped area that collects, absorbs, and filters stormwater runoff from roof tops, driveways, and other hard surfaces. Full guidance and useful information can be found in the following resources:

1) Kitsap County Stormwater Design Manual, Vol II, Chapter 5.4.5
2) Department of Ecology Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington BMP T5.14
3) Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington

Rain Garden Placement

Several things affect the placement of a rain garden – locate your rain garden in accordance with the following

- Minimum 10' from property lines
- Minimum 10' from another infiltration BMP
- Minimum 10' from structures with a basement (5' for structures without a basement)
- Minimum 30' from an on-site septic system, where the rain garden is uphill from the septic system
- Minimum 10' from an on-site septic system, where the rain garden is to the side or downhill from the septic system
- Minimum 100' from any open water features or designated landslide hazards
- Minimum 50' from any top of slope over 15%
- Minimum 200' from any top of slope 30% or greater (can be reduced with geotechnical evaluation)
- Rain gardens may not be installed on any slopes steeper than 20% without geotechnical evaluation

Other Considerations

- If a Rain Garden is being proposed to meet Stormwater permit requirements, see **Appendix C** of the Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington titled *Introduction to Washington State Department of Ecology's Requirements for Rain Gardens in Western Washington*. This section discusses Rain Gardens from a Municipal permit requirement perspective.
- Take time to plan your Rain Garden project. Start with Chapter 1 of the Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington, *How to get Started*.
- A minimum 1' of separation is required between the bottom of the rain garden and both hardpan and seasonal high-water table.
- Utilities – to prevent extra expense and hazardous conditions, make sure to have all utilities located and marked before digging. Utility companies typically locate and mark power, gas, phone, water, and other lines or facilities. Contact utility locate services by dialing 811.
- See Kitsap County Stormwater Design Manual, Vol II, Chapter 5.4.5 for information about other constraints that may apply.

Test Your Soil

Test the soil at your Rain Garden site for soil texture (size of soil particles) and the soil drainage rate. The soil drainage rate, also known as Infiltration, measures the amount of time it takes for water to soak into the ground. Chapter 1 of the Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington describes how to test these features. The test data is needed to determine feasibility of the drainage method and for Rain Garden sizing. Infiltration requirements can also be found in the 2021 Kitsap County Stormwater Design Manual under Infiltration Feasibility.

Determine Rain Garden Size

After testing your soil, determine the proper size of your Rain Garden. See Chapter 1 of the Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington section titled, *Determine the size of your Rain Garden*. Follow the steps in this section to calculate the appropriate size Rain Garden for your location and soil condition.

Soil Requirements

See Chapter 2 of the Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington section called *Excavate and rain garden soil*. Soil options range from soil replacement to soil amendments. There are also some soil practices to avoid discussed in this section.

Plants

Plants and soil work together in the Rain Garden. Chapter 3 of the Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington discusses the three planting zones within the Rain Garden, the best plant types for each zone, and suggested plant spacing. This section refers to the Plant List available in **Appendix A**. Remember that you may need to order your plants from the nursery or other sources ahead of time.

Maintain your Rain Garden

Rain gardens, just like any garden area, need maintenance to perform well and look good. In Chapter 4 of the Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington you can find key elements to help minimize maintenance effort while maximizing your Rain Garden's effectiveness - what to do, when to do it, and how much is needed. There is also a *Maintenance Checklist* which is a helpful visual reference, and a *Troubleshooting guide*. This handbook also contains **Appendix B** *Other Resources and Websites* to assist.

More Questions?

Visit: Contact Us
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