

## RAIN GARDENS by Jan Blaire, Steering Committee of The Native Plant Center

A rain garden can be created from a shallow depression in the ground that can be natural or man-made. A rain garden may be used to collect rain water that might normally go into the street and down a storm drain. The rain water that is initially collected contains the highest concentration of pollutants washed off of impervious surfaces such as roofs, roads, and parking lots. The stored water slowly dissipates into the ground and is naturally filtered by the stones, soil and plant roots. Rain gardens can be small areas located on a lawn or as large as a bioretention system in a parking lot. The reason for creating them is to purify and keep water where it falls and not send it out filled with pollutants into our lakes, rivers and oceans.

Rain gardens are usually planted with **perennial native plants**, designed to slow, capture, and infiltrate rain. **Native plants** are an excellent choice for planting because they are drought-resistant, are best adapted to soil and temperature conditions in a particular area, and attract butterflies and birds.

Rain gardens are beneficial because they:

- Recharge local groundwater
- Conserve water
- Improve water quality
- Remove standing water in a yard
- Reduce mosquito breeding
- Reduce potential for flooding

In addition to creating a rain garden, you may also choose to buy or make a rain barrel. Rain barrels are containers that collect rain water from your roof. This water can be used later to water plants inside or outside your home.

It is becoming more apparent that there is a need for water conservation across the entire country. Keeping rain water where it falls is a natural solution. By creating a rain garden, you will have a lovely garden plus you will be helping to protect our rivers, streams, and lakes from pollution caused by dirty water from heavy storms, i.e., stormwater runoff.