Roofs, Runoff, & Rain Gardens

This garden before you is a **Rain Garden**, installed to demonstrate how you can manage storm water as part of your home landscape. Rain gardens protect water quality by reducing storm water runoff, while adding beauty to your yard!

When rain falls in developed areas where much of the natural vegetation is gone, it runs off hard surfaces like roofs and roads rather than filtering into the soil. Fast-moving "storm water" picks up pollutants — oil, sediment, bacteria, pesticides and fertilizers—as it runs over the land, then gets carried through catch basins and pipes into wetlands, streams, rivers, lakes and oceans. Runoff can cause downstream flooding and contaminate local waterways and Long Island Sound, harming fish, shellfish and other aquatic life.

Like a bowl in the landscape, a rain garden collects storm water, filters it and allows it to soak into the ground. Rain gardens are planted with wet-loving perennials and woody shrubs native to the area. Pollutants are held or broken down by the plants and soils in a rain garden, keeping them out of our waterways. Rain gardens are easy to maintain and make an attractive and practical addition to your yard!

The Acton Public Library rain garden is fed by runoff from the roof, directed through a pipe to the garden. The native shrubs and perennials planted in the garden absorb water and pollutants, and also provide food and habitat for butterflies, birds and other wildlife.

What can you do at your home?

Whether you live in the woods, in town or on the shore, you can reduce the impact that you and your landscape have on local waterways.

- If you can, install your own rain garden!
- Direct gutter downspouts to surfaces like lawns or wetlands where water can soak in, or use a rain barrel to catch rain water.
- Test your soil before fertilizing your lawn, and use organic alternatives if fertilizer is needed
- Look for safe alternatives to toxic pesticides and herbicides that are harmful to humans, pets or aquatic life.
- Pick up after your pets!

For more information about rain garden uses and design, and other tips for your home, ask inside the library!

Many thanks to the community volunteers who helped construct this demonstration rain garden to inspire and educate others; to Scotts Farm Store in Old Saybrook for donating the mulch; and to Michael Dietz, CT NEMO Program Director, who designed the rain garden, instructed volunteers and supervised the installation.

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