Learn More
Attend one of our free rain garden workshops.
For more information about rain gardens or to sign up for a workshop, please visit our website.
Would your group like a rain garden, stormwater, or other low impact development presentation? Please contact Candace Stoughton for assistance at candace@emswcd.org or 503-222-7645.

Please keep in mind
This brochure is intended to provide general guidance. Rain gardens are not appropriate for every site. Each property is unique and some have complicating factors that may require hiring a professional. EMSWCD, its staff and contractors are not responsible for any loss or damage resulting from the installation of a rain garden.

About EMSWCD
East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District is a unit of local government serving the residents and landowners of Multnomah County east of the Willamette River. We use a cooperative, non-regulatory approach to preserve soil and keep the water clean.

Good Rain Garden Plants

- Creeping Oregon Grape: Mahonia nervosa
- Douglas Aster: Aster subspicatus
- Oregon Iris: Iris tenax
- Tufted Hair-grass: Deschampsia cespitosa
- Bamboo Chameleon Plant: Burmeistera australis
- Bishop’s Weed: Goodenia ovata
- Butterfly Bush: Euonymus alatus
- Chameleons: Butterfly Bush: Euonymus alatus
- Horsetail Plant: Equisetum arvense
- Creeping Jenny: Lysimachia nummularia
- Japanese Knotweed: Fallopia japonica
- Yellow-flag Iris: Iris pseudacorus
- Woodland Strawberry: Fragaria vesca
- Fringecup: Tellima grandiflora
- Salal: Gaultheria shallon
- Western Red Columbine: Aquilegia formosa
- Common Camas: Camassia quamash
- Red Osier Dogwood: Cornus sericea
- Stream Violet: Viola glabella
- Cardwell’s Penstemon: Penstemon cardwellii
- Pacific Rush: Juncus effusus var. pacificus
- Northwest Cinquefoil: Potentilla gracilis
- Sword Fern: Polystichum munitum
- Western Bleeding Heart: Dicentra formosa

Don’t use these plants:
These plants are listed on the city of Portland’s Nuisance plant list. See www.emswcd.org for a full list.

- Creeping Oregon Grape: Mahonia nervosa
- Douglas Aster: Aster subspicatus
- Oregon Iris: Iris tenax
- Tufted Hair-grass: Deschampsia cespitosa
- Bamboo Chameleon Plant: Burmeistera australis
- Bishop’s Weed: Goodenia ovata
- Butterfly Bush: Euonymus alatus
- Chameleons: Butterfly Bush: Euonymus alatus
- Horsetail Plant: Equisetum arvense
- Creeping Jenny: Lysimachia nummularia
- Japanese Knotweed: Fallopia japonica
- Yellow-flag Iris: Iris pseudacorus
- Woodland Strawberry: Fragaria vesca
- Fringecup: Tellima grandiflora
- Salal: Gaultheria shallon
- Western Red Columbine: Aquilegia formosa
- Common Camas: Camassia quamash
- Red Osier Dogwood: Cornus sericea
- Stream Violet: Viola glabella
- Cardwell’s Penstemon: Penstemon cardwellii
- Pacific Rush: Juncus effusus var. pacificus
- Northwest Cinquefoil: Potentilla gracilis
- Sword Fern: Polystichum munitum
- Western Bleeding Heart: Dicentra formosa

The EMSWCD prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisals, or because all or part of an individual’s income is derived from any public assistance program. EMSWCD is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
What is a rain garden?
A rain garden is a “sunken garden bed” in your yard where you can
direct runoff from your roof, driveway and other impervious
surfaces on your property. The rain can
then soak into the ground
normally rather than running
off into storm drains.

Why build one?
When a landscape is covered in
natural vegetation, most rainfall soaks into
the ground. As we build impervious surfaces like roofs, driveways, sidewalks, and streets, much of the rainfall can’t
soak into the ground anymore. This can create problems, not just for people, but also for streams.

Rain gardens are a beautiful and effective way to manage stormwater runoff because they allow rain to soak into
the ground naturally. This prevents pollution from entering our local streams and wetlands, recharges groundwater and keeps water flowing in our streams during summer months. Rain gardens are becoming very popular because they are planted with hardy, low-maintenance and drought tolerant plants. They are an easy way for all of us to
do our part to protect our streams and rivers, and they provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies and beneficial insects.

IMPORTANT!
To avoid drainage problems, place your rain garden at least six feet from your house if you have a basement (two feet if you
don’t) and five feet from your property line. Call your
local jurisdiction to find out if you need a permit to discon-
nect your downspout or if there are special requirements.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do rain gardens breed mosquitoes?
No. Because rain gardens are shallow and are only built on soils with sufficient drainage, they are designed to dry out before mosquitoes can reproduce.

Can I install a rain garden if I have a septic system?
Yes, but it is very important not to place a rain garden over an active septic system drain field.

Will my rain garden have standing water for more than a day?
Rain gardens are de-
signed to infiltrate water in about a day. If it rains several days in a row, it is possible that your rain garden may have standing water until the rain stops and the water has time to soak in.

How to Do a Percolation Test
1. Dig a hole at least 12” deep.
2. Fill with water and let drain.
3. Fill with water a second time. If the water drains at least 1/2” in an hour the second time you fill it, your soil has adequate drainage for a rain garden.

Rain Garden Zones

Top (T) - for plants that prefer drier, more well-drained conditions
Slope (S) - for plants that can tolerate both wet and dry conditions
Bottom (B) - for plants that can handle occasional standing water

Shady Garden

Key: Common Name, Scientific Name, ZONES, Mature ht.

A. Creeping Oregon Grape, Mahonia nervosa
B. Western Columbine, Aquilegia formosa
C. Tufted Hair-grass, Deschampsia cespitosa
D. Douglas Aster, Aster subspicatus
E. Common Camas, Camassia quamash
F. Oregon Iris, Iris tenax
G. Cardwell’s Penstemon, Penstemon cardwellii
H. Northwest Cinquefoil, Potentilla gracilis
I. Red Osier Dogwood, Cornus sericea
J. Slough Sedge, Carex obtusa

No. Because rain gardens are shallow and are only built on soils with sufficient drainage, they are designed to dry out before mosquitoes can reproduce.