

Rain Garden Plants

For the Brazos County Residential Landscape

A rain garden (or bioretention area) is a shallow, landscaped depression, designed to capture, temporarily hold, and absorb rainwater that flows off impervious surfaces such as roofs, driveways, and sidewalks, before it can become runoff.



*A rain garden with rain still in it.
Photo courtesy of sustainableroguevalley.org*

A rain garden is not a pond, because it is only meant to hold water for 24-48 hours at a time. Therefore, designing a rain garden requires a special collection of plants which can tolerate standing in very wet conditions for the time it takes for the garden to drain. At other times, the plants

A bioswale is the stream version of a rain garden. It uses plantings and structure to slow the flow of moving rainwater. A bioswale can be used to guide rainwater from its impervious source into a rain garden that is further away, as well.



*A bioswale in an old Houston neighborhood.
Photo courtesy of [the Houston Chronicle](http://theHoustonChronicle.com)*

may need to be able to tolerate fairly dry conditions. These are the superhero plants of stormwater management!

The Zones of a Rain Garden

There are 3 main areas in a rain garden: the base or center, inside slope or median, and buffer or margin.

The base is the deepest part of the rain garden, where plants will need to be the most tolerant of soggy conditions. The base can be at the center of a bowl-shaped rain garden, or may be at the back of a rain garden on a slope that employs a berm to contain the water. This will also affect plant selection, since taller plants generally look nicest at the back of a planting, or in the center of a planting that can be seen from multiple sides.

The inside slope of the rain garden is drier than the base. It can be planted with those species that do well in moist soil but can't be wet for as long. The margin or buffer plantings will need to be the most suited to drier conditions. Since the margin is an area that can experience erosion as water rushes into the rain garden, the margin plants may need to be suited to growing among erosion-proof materials like gravel or another type of heavy mulch. If your rain garden uses a berm, the berm will be the area of driest conditions and so should have plantings that tolerate less water availability.

One thing to keep in mind when selecting plants for the rain garden is that the purpose is to create a sponge-like environment that will hold and process water efficiently. Species with longer roots and more powerful root systems such as grasses and shrubs should be incorporated when possible.

Plants for a Brazos County Rain Garden

This list is by no means exhaustive. To investigate additional possible plantings for your rain garden, go to the following website:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/EKSelector.html>

Botanical Name	Common Name	Category	Native or Naturalized	Wet Zone
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	Perennial	no	margin
<i>Aquilegia hinckleyana</i>	Hinckley's Columbine	perennial		median, margin

Botanical Name	Common Name	Category	Native or Naturalized	Wet Zone
<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	butterfly weed	wildflower	yes	margin
<i>Aspidistra elatior</i>	cast iron plant	perennial	no	any
<i>Bignonia capreolata</i>	crossvine	vine	yes	any
<i>Callicarpa americana</i>	American beautyberry	shrub	yes	any
<i>Canna</i> spp.	Canna lily	perennial	no	any
<i>Chasmanthium latifolium</i>	inland sea oats	grass	yes	any
<i>Crinum</i> spp.	Crinum	perennial	yes	any
<i>Cyperus alternifolius</i>	Umbrella Sedge	perennial	yes	center
<i>Delphinium virescens</i>	prairie larkspur	wildflower	yes	any
<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	purple coneflower	wildflower	yes	margin
<i>Gaillardia</i> spp.	blanketflower	wildflower	yes	margin
<i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i>	Carolina jessamine	wildflower	yes	any
<i>Habranthus</i> spp.	rain lily	wildflower	no	any
<i>Helianthus maximiliani</i>	Maximilian daisy	wildflower	yes	center
<i>Hemerocallis</i> spp.	daylilies	perennial	yes	any
<i>Hibiscus coccineus</i>	red Texas star hibiscus	shrub	yes	center
<i>Hibiscus coccineus</i> 'Lone Star'	white Texas star hibiscus	shrub	yes	center
<i>Hymenocallis liriosome</i>	spider lily	wildflower	yes	center
<i>Ilex decidua</i>	possumhaw holly	tree	yes	margin
<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>	yaupon holly	tree	yes	margin
<i>Iris brevicaulis</i>	Louisiana iris	wildflower	yes	center
<i>Iris fulva</i>	red Louisiana iris	wildflower	Yes	center
<i>Iris</i> spp.	wild iris	wildflower	Yes	center
<i>Iris versicolor</i>	blue flag iris	wildflower	Yes	center
<i>Lantana horrida</i>	Texas lantana	wildflower	Yes	margin

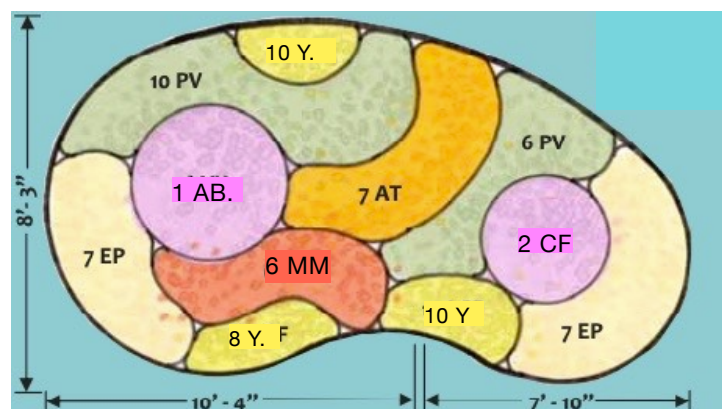
Botanical Name	Common Name	Category	Native or Naturalized	Wet Zone
<i>Liatrix spicata</i>	gayfeather (blazing star)	wildflower	Yes	any
<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	cardinal flower	wildflower	yes	center
<i>Malvaviscus arboreus</i>	giant turk's cap	shrub		any
<i>Malvaviscus drummondii</i>	turk's cap	shrub	yes	median, margin
<i>Monarda didyma</i>	bee balm	wildflower	yes	any
<i>Myrica cerifera</i>	southern wax myrtle	tree	yes	median, margin
<i>Oenothera speciosa</i>	pink evening primrose	wildflower	yes	median
<i>Oxalis crassipes</i>	wood sorrel	groundcover	yes	margin
<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	switchgrass	grass	yes	center
<i>Passiflora incarnata</i>	passionflower	vine	yes	any
<i>Plumbago auriculata</i>	blue plumbago	shrub	no	margin
<i>Rudbeckia maxima</i>	giant coneflower	wildflower	yes	any
<i>Ruellia brittoniana</i> 'Katie'	dwarf Mexican petunia	wildflower	yes	any
<i>Ruellia</i> spp.	Mexican petunia	wildflower	yes	any
<i>Sabal minor</i>	dwarf palmetto	shrub	yes	any
<i>Salvia greggii</i>	cherry sage	wildflower	yes	margin
<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	American elderberry	shrub	yes	any
<i>Setcreasea pallida</i>	purple heart	groundcover		median, margin
<i>Solidago</i> spp.	goldenrods	wildflower	yes	any
<i>Tagetes lucida</i>	Mexican mint marigold	perennial		margin
<i>Taxodium distichum</i>	bald cypress	tree	yes	Any
<i>Zephyranthes</i> spp.	Rain Lily	perennial	yes	Center

Sample Plans for Brazos County Rain Gardens

Some common designs for rain gardens are kidney bean-shaped or bowl-shaped, but the shape will ultimately be determined by the space available and personal taste.

Bird, Bee, & Butterfly Meadow- Sun

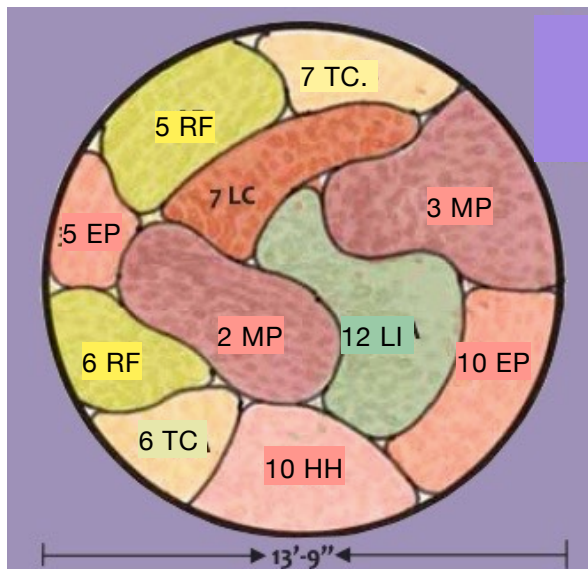
Abr	Qty	Botanical Name	Common Name	Height	Spread	Spacing	Install. Size	Moisture Tolerance
AT	7	Asclepias tuberosa	Butterfly Plant	1-2.5'	1-1.5'	15-22"	1 gallon	Dry
MM	6	Tagetes lucida	Mexican Mint Marigold	1-2'	1-3'	22"	1 gallon	Wet/Dry
EP	14	Echinacea purpurea	Purple Coneflower	30"	1-2'	15-22"	1 gallon	Wet/Dry
Y	28	Achillea millefolium	Yarrow	1'	1'	15"	1 gallon	Dry
PV	16	Panicum virgatum	Switchgrass	3-4'	2-3'	22-30"	1-2 gallon	Wet/Dry
AB	1	Callicarpa Americana	American Beautyberry	4-6'	5-8'	N/A	1-2 gallon	Wet/Dry
CF	2	Lobelia cardinalis	Cardinal flower	2-4'	2'	22-30"	4" pot	Wet



Designed for 150 ft² rain garden in full sun. Template (before modification) courtesy of [University of Vermont seagrant publications](#)

Native Woods & Wildlife Garden- Part shade

Abr	Qty	Botanical Name	Common Name	Height	Spread	Spacing	Install. Size	Moisture Tolerance
LI	12	Iris brevicaulis LA species	Louisiana Iris	Up to 40"	6"	15"	1 gallon	Wet
EP	15	Oenothera speciosa	Pink Evening Primrose	6-12"	12-15"	15"	1 gallon	Wet/Dry
TC	13	Malvaviscus arboreus var. drummondii	Turk's cap	2-3'	1'	15-22"	1 gallon	Wet/Dry
RF	11	Theylypteris kunthii	River Fern	3'	3'	22-30"	1 gallon	Wet/Dry
HH	10	Calyptocarpus vials	Horseherb	4"	18"	15-22"	4" pots	Wet/Dry
MP	5	Ruellia spp.	Mexican Petunia	3'	3'	22-30"	1 gallon	Wet/Dry
CF	7	Lobelia cardinalis	Cardinal flower	2-4'	2'	22-30"	4" pot	Wet



Designed for 150 ft² rain garden in full sun. Template (before modification) courtesy of [University of Vermont seagrant publications](#)

Sources:

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