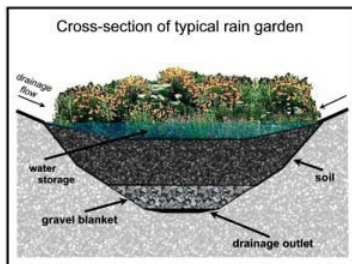


## UNH Cooperative Extension Info Line Question of the Week

### Rain Gardens



#### Q. What exactly does a rain garden do?

A. Rain gardens are what they sound like, gardens that soak up rain. Rain gardens collect run-off from roofs, driveways, yards and parking lots and allow that water to filter into the ground where it is used by plants. Rain gardens help protect the water quality in our lakes, streams, rivers and ponds by reducing the amount of polluted run-off reaching them. If installed correctly, rain gardens can easily collect up to 90% of the run-off from impervious surfaces.

Rain gardens are based on the idea that roots of the right plants, given the time to do so, will soak up large amounts of water, usually within a day. Rain gardens are not located in places where water stands for several days after a heavy rain. Water drains too slowly into the soil in these areas. Instead, an ideal location for a rain garden is where water is already going – on a downslope that drains well and is at least 10 feet away from a building.

Why are we hearing so much about rain gardens now? As our population increases, agricultural and forest land is being replaced by cities and suburbs. Instead of soaking into the ground, stormwater quickly runs off the impervious surfaces in these developed areas. Flooding is more frequent, especially “flash” flooding. For this reason there is often a requirement that stormwater remain on site in new developments. One way to accomplish this is by installing rain gardens. Ultimately, rain gardens can reduce erosion, help recharge our groundwater, protect surface waters from pollutants carried by stormwater, and provide habitat for wildlife.

**Got questions?** UNH Cooperative Extension Education Center’s Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or e-mail us at [answers@unh.edu](mailto:answers@unh.edu).