

GARDENING FOR WATER CONSERVATION

This document was prepared for the May 2007 Foresight Action Item: 'Every Drop Matters'

The modern lawn requires significant amounts of water to thrive. About one-third of all residential water use goes toward lawns and gardens, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Though much of this water is wasted through runoff, evaporation, over watering, or inefficient landscape designs. Three ways to reduce your water use are xeriscaping, native landscaping and rain gardens.

	XERISCAPING	NATIVE LANDSCAPING	RAIN GARDENS
WHAT:	Xeriscaping is simple landscaping techniques that create a beautiful lawn or garden that uses up to 60 percent less water. Techniques included grouping plants that have similar water needs to help minimize the need for supplemental watering, adding organic material such as compost to soil to help improve its quality and ability to store water yet drain quickly, and replacing grass with less water-intensive plants such as trees, shrubs, flowers, or low-growing ground covers.	Natural or native landscapes are tracts of land that have been planted with native prairie, woodland and wetland plants. Native plants are plants that have evolved in a particular region over many thousands of years. Therefore, they have many advantages that come from their having adapted to the climate, geography, soils, and animal populations of the region.	A rain garden is an attractive, landscaped area planted with perennial native plants which don't mind getting wet feet. They are gardens, built in depressions, which are designed to capture and filter storm water runoff from impervious surfaces around the home, such as rooftops and driveways. A rain garden is a natural way to adjust the amount of water and rate at which it exits a property by using creative landscaping with native plants.
WHY:	It is simple, uses less water, requires less fertilizer and pesticides, and saves you time and money.	The deep root systems of many native midwestern plants increase the soil's capacity to store water. Native plants can significantly reduce water runoff and, consequently, flooding. Once established, native plants are hardier than many of their non-native, cultivated cousins. They have natural defenses to many diseases and insect pests. Native plants also provide food and meet the functional habitat needs for our native wildlife such as birds, butterflies and mammals.	As development increases there are more demands placed on our local environment and more impervious surfaces associated with development (rooftops, driveways and roads) that are unable to absorb water. Impervious surfaces reduce the ability of our landscape to absorb and filter storm water and increase the chance for pollution to enter our waterways through our storm drainage systems, including sewers and open ditches. An easy way to help keep these pollutants out of our local waterways is to install a rain garden.
FURTHER RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Openlands Corporatelands Program: www.openlands.org/corporatelands.asp - Illinois Native Plant Guide: Native Plant Applications for Streams and Stormwater Facilities: www.il.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/plants/npg/NPG-plntapps.html - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Green Landscaping with Native Plants, Overview: www.epa.gov/greenacres.index.html - American Water Works Association Publication: Water Conservation Programs—A Planning Manual www.awwa.org/bookstore/product.cfm?id=30052 - Landscape Design for Water Conservation, University of Florida IFAS Extension: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG027 - Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District: Rain Garden Manual: http://www.cuyahogawcd.org/grantfunded-raingardens.htm - Applied Ecological Services Inc.: http://www.appliedeco.com/RainGarden.cfm - Colorado Water Wise Council: http://www.xeriscape.org/ 		