

# WHO WE ARE

## ► MISSION STATEMENT

The Stormwater Environmental Team is ultimately focused on protecting and improving the quality of local bodies of water. This is done by implementing flood control systems, water monitoring, and enforcing water-friendly construction practices that follow Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards. Keeping environmental issues in mind, the division strives to keep the city's water safe for recreation as well as usage at home.

## ♥ VALUES

Stormwater pollution is one of the greatest threats to Rockford's creeks and rivers. Clean water means safe drinking water, places for recreation, commercial opportunities, healthy wildlife habitats, and adds beauty to the landscape. Rain washes pollution from streets, parking lots and lawns into storm sewers and drainage ditches then directly to our streams, rivers and ultimately, the ocean.

# CONTACT US



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SCAN QR CODE BELOW FOR DIRECT ACCESS  
TO OUR WEBSITE.



# RAIN GARDENS & RAIN BARRELS



PROTECTING AND IMPROVING  
THE QUALITY OF LOCAL  
BODIES OF WATER

## RAIN BARRELS

Rain barrels are an excellent way to help the environment in urban areas because they catch rainwater and reduce storm water runoff which carries pollutants and sediment directly to creeks and rivers. The barrels also save you money and precious groundwater supplies. The free stored rain water, which is naturally soft and free of chlorine, is great for use in gardens, houseplants, lawns and trees.

An average home with a roof size of 1,000 square feet will generate approximately 600 gallons of water from a 1-inch rainfall. Collecting and using this water with rain barrels helps reduce the demand on public and private water supplies, and reduces pollution, flooding, and erosion in local waterways by reducing storm water runoff.

All barrels have a garden hose size spigot at the bottom, an overflow fitting to allow the excess water that flows from the downspout to be diverted away from the barrel, and a linking hose fitting so two or more barrels can be joined together. The barrels come fitted with a screw-on mesh lid to keep out debris and mosquitoes.

The Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District has rain barrels and accessories for sale at their office located at 4833 Owen Center Road, Rockford, Illinois. Scan the QR code below for direct access to the website.



## HOW CAN I CREATE MY OWN RAIN GARDEN?

**Location** - Position your garden at least 15 feet from your home to prevent flooding around the foundation. Where does your stormwater flow? Rain gardens are designed to infiltrate water so it is best to build your rain garden in low spots.

**Size** - Rain gardens are typically 5 to 10 percent the size of the impervious surface which generates the runoff entering the garden. Measure the square footage of the impervious area (length x width), then multiply this by the number associated with your soil type. For sandy soil, multiply by 20%; for loam use 30-35%; for clay use 45-60%. These numbers will ensure that your garden holds as much water as possible.

**Choose Plants** - Native plants are suggested because they are best adapted to our climate. Choose yours based on site considerations for light, moisture, and soil. Vary plant structure, height, and flower color for seasonal appeal and butterfly habitat.

**Dig Garden and Amend the Soil** - Dig your garden 4-8 inches deep, and mix the soil with 2-3 inches of compost and sand to enhance infiltration.

**Plant Flowers and Grasses** - Young plants, or plugs, are best for rain gardens because they are easier to establish and maintain. When laying plants out, randomly clump individual species in groups of 3 to 5 plants to provide bolder color. Be sure to repeat these individual groupings to create repetition and cohesion in your planting. It is a good idea to place plant labels next to each individual grouping. This will help identify the young native plants from weeds as you maintain the garden.

**Mulch and Water the Garden** - Apply 2-3 inches of mulch to your garden and water it every other day for the first two weeks. Once the garden is established and growing well, it will thrive without additional water or fertilizer.

## WHY USE NATIVE PLANTS?

- Native plants provide a beautiful, hardy, drought-resistant, low maintenance landscape while benefiting the environment.
- Native plants do not require fertilizer.
- Native plants require fewer pesticides than lawns.
- Native plants require less water than lawns.
- Native plants help reduce air pollution.
- Native plants do not require mowing. Gas-powered garden tools emit 5% of the nation's air pollution.
- Native plants sequester, or remove, carbon from the air.
- Native plants provide shelter and food for wildlife.
- Native plants create biodiversity and promote stewardship of our natural heritage.

