

# What is a Rain Garden?

Rain gardens slow the flow of rainwater and use plants to remove pollutants and improve infiltration, allowing the water to sink into the ground. Rain gardens reduce run off into storm drains which can alleviate flooding, prevent erosion in creeks, and reduce pollutants from entering waterways.

A rain garden is a shallow depression meant to collect rainwater from a downspout or paved area and planted with vegetation that can tolerate wet conditions.

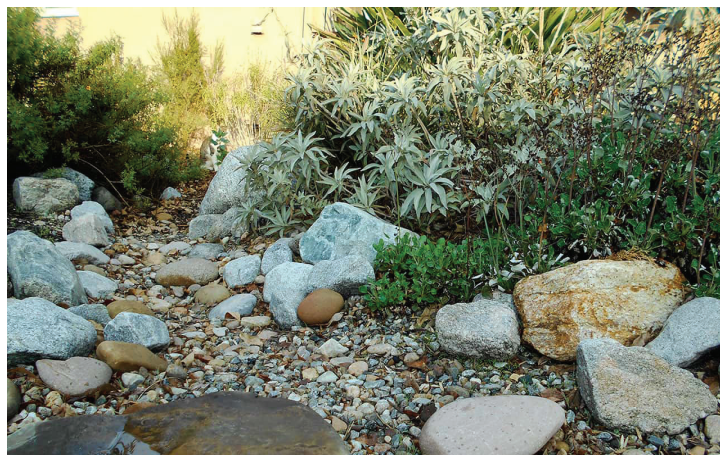
## Recommended plants:

### Grasses:

- Carex tumulicola - Berkeley Sedge
- Juncus patens - Common Rush
- Muhlenbergia rigens - Deer Grass
- Stipa pulchra - Purple Needle Grass

### Shrubs:

- Solidago spathulata - California Goldenrod
- Eriogonum spp. - California Buchwheat
- Mimulus aurantiacus - Sticky Monkey Flower
- Epilobium canum - California Fuchsia
- Lupinus albifrons - Silver Bush Lupine
- Sambucus cerulea - Blue Elderberry



## Design Considerations:

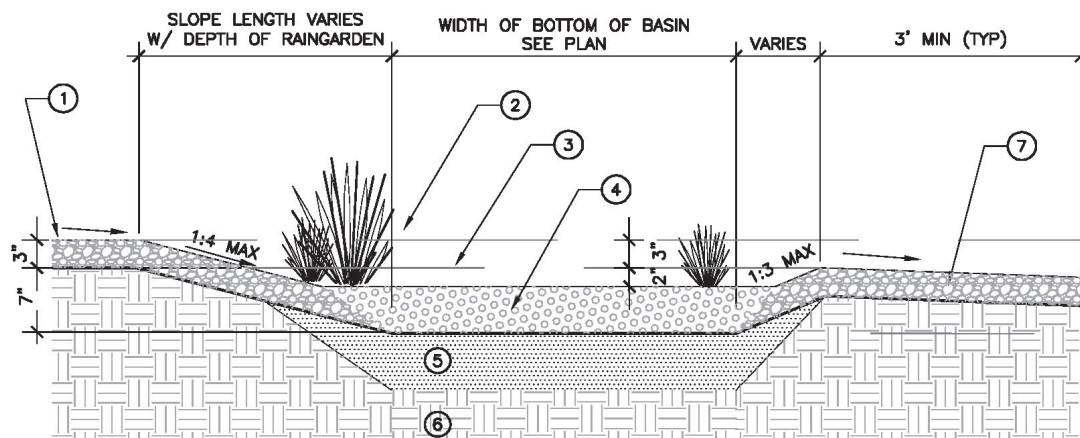
- Rain gardens must be sited at least 10 feet from structures and have an overflow spillway to an appropriate area.
- Consult with a geotechnical engineer if on a slope or unstable soils.
- Ensure water does not pond in the rain garden for more than 72 hours to prevent mosquito breeding.



- ① SWALE OR SHEET FLOW INTO RAIN GARDEN FROM DS OR PAVING AREA. COVER SOIL W/ 3" OF RIVER COBBLE 1.5"–6" IN SIZE.
- ② TOP ELEVATION OF THE BERM AROUND RAIN GARDEN. 3" ABOVE MAX PONDING LEVEL.
- ③ ELEVATION OF MAX PONDING DURING STORM EVENT. PONDING OF 2" OF RAINWATER ABOVE PEA GRAVEL.
- ④ 5" PEA GRAVEL MULCH INSURES NO PONDING WITHIN 72 HRS FOR MOSQUITO CONTROL. TOTAL DEPTH INCLUDING PONDING IS 7".
- ⑤ SCARIFY & AMEND NATIVE SOIL AT BOTTOM OF RAIN GARDEN.
- ⑥ UNDISTURBED SUBGRADE.
- ⑦ 3" THICK OF 1.5–6" RIVER COBBLE. EXTEND 3' DOWNSLOPE FROM RAINGARDEN. INSTALL LEVEL SPREADER TO RETURN TO SHEET FLOW AS NEEDED BY DESIGN.

**NOTES:**

1. RAINWATER GARDEN DESIGNED FOR CLAY SOILS. MAX DEPTH 7" OF WHICH 5" HAS A PEA GRAVEL MULCH.
2. NO WOOD CHIP OR BARK MULCH IN RAINWATER SYSTEMS TO AVOID CLOGGING STORM DRAINS DOWNSTREAM.



*This diagram is from the Water Smart Landscape Design Templates, Optional Elements Packet  
<https://www.savingwaterpartnership.org/landscape-templates/>*

## Maintenance Tips:

- Do not add wood chips, mulch, compost, amendments or fertilizer to the rain garden.
- Remove any organic matter or silt that may build up over time.
- Inspect the rain garden for signs of erosion. If erosion occurs, add plants or use a larger gravel, such as 1-1/2" drain rock or river cobble.
- When pruning grasses or sedges, remove cuttings and add them to your compost pile or place in the green bin.
- Seed or plant bare soil areas in early fall before the rainy season.



**For more information, download the Water Smart Maintenance Manual:**



<https://www.savingwaterpartnership.org/garden-manual/>

