FACT SHEET

Rain Gardens

Incorporating rain gardens into your landscaping plan is a fun, easy and beautiful way to help protect Grand Traverse Bay's water quality. Rain gardens are technically called bioretention systems. A rain garden is a natural depression in the ground designed to absorb rainwater runoff from impervious surfaces such as roads, driveways and roofs. Studies show that up to 70 percent of pollution in rivers, lakes and streams is carried by stormwater. This type of pollution causes increased algae growth and destroys fish spawning habitat.

Rain garden benefits:

- Absorb and filter stormwater runoff, removing sediments and excess nutrients such as phosphorus before water flows to the nearest waterway

- Maintenance is similar to perennial gardens

- No need for watering after established

- Attract beautiful birds, butterflies and wildlife

- Use little or no pesticides

- Recharge ground water

- Solve soil erosion problems

How to install a rain garden:

- Locate it strategically to intercept stormwater runoff

- Your rain garden can be symmetrical or wild

- Ideal depth is six inches, with a flat bottom

- Plant native plants, which have longer roots to absorb more runoff and pollutants, reduce erosion, and require little if any fertilizers, pesticides and maintenance. You can plant wildflowers, sedges, rushes, ferns, shrubs and even small trees. Some wetland-loving native wildflowers include Joe Pye Weed, Marsh Marigold and Blue Flag Iris.

- Consult local nursery experts