TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH

Designing a Rain Garden

The Hillsborough Public Space Division, Hillsborough Tree Board and North Carolina Cooperative Extension highly recommend creating a rain garden on your property if the conditions are right.

Rain gardens:

- Are constructed on the downside of a slope.
- Collect rain runoff from a lawn, roof or driveway.
- Allow rainwater to slowly soak into the ground without holding water continuously like a pond.

Rain gardens like those at Cates Creek Park prevent soil erosion and flooding.

Benefits

Rain gardens are beneficial because they:

- Filter pollutants and fertilizers that would otherwise enter local waterways.
- Prevent soil erosion and flooding.
- Replenish groundwater by allowing runoff to seep into the soil.
- Provide food and shelter to native birds and pollinators when native plants are used.
- Are more cost effective and easier to maintain than lawns.

Building a rain garden

As you're making plans for a rain garden:

- Observe patterns of water runoff on your property during a heavy rain.
- Place the garden downhill between the runoff source and where water leaves the property.
- Place the garden at least 10 feet from a home and 25 feet from septic systems and wellheads.
- Avoid underground utilities by calling 811 before you dig to get utilities marked.
- Conduct a filtration test, determine the volume of water flowing into the garden and estimate the cost (explained in the linked video below).

When constructing your rain garden:

- Remove 1 to 2 feet of soil from the area.
- Amend the topsoil to refill the garden.
- Create a border of grass or rock to slow water flow into the garden.
- Build a berm at the flow's exit to slow water leaving the garden.
- Develop an overflow zone in the berm to channel excess water away once the garden fills.

More information

View the video on the Town of Hillsborough's YouTube channel. The North Carolina Cooperative Extension website also has information about rain gardens.