

# INTRODUCTION

Preventing pollution of local lakes and streams can be beautiful, particularly if you plant a rain garden! Rain gardens are gardens that are specifically designed to prevent water pollution by soaking up rain water from roofs, patios and driveways. Information on how to design a rain garden can be found in the companion brochure, "An Introduction to Rain Gardens." This brochure is intended to assist you in the selection of plants that are appropriate for rain gardens.

The common requirement for all rain garden plants is that they must be able to tolerate periodic flooding. All of the plants on the following pages meet that criteria. The next step in choosing plants is determining the amount of sun versus shade at your site. Most of the plants listed will do well in a range of conditions, but they do have their preferences. For example, the ferns listed will do better in shadier conditions. Once you have figured out which plants meet the requirements of your site, the fun begins. The plant list is organized so that it is easy to select plants that have a variety of heights and bloom times. Think about color and texture too. Nothing is more vibrant than the red of a cardinal flower, while the ethereal quality of the switch grass flowers will take your breath away. Don't be afraid to try something new. Whatever you choose, you can delight in the fact that you are creating something of beauty, your personal contribution to cleaner water.

**Note:** Unless noted, all the plants listed are native to New York State and are hardy to the climate of Central New York. If you live outside of this area, you will need to check to see if the plant is suitable for your location.



For more information about rain gardens, or how to design and construct one for your own yard, contact:

## CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION OF ONONDAGA COUNTY

220 Herald Place, 2nd Floor, Syracuse NY 13202  
 Phone: (315) 424-9485  
 Email: onondaga@cornell.edu  
 Web: www.cce.cornell.edu/onondaga



# Rain Garden Plant List



Species/Common Name	Soil Moisture	Bloom Time							Exposure	Mature Size	Comments
		April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct			
<i>Andropogon gerardii</i> Big Bluestem	Moist-Dry				x	x			sun	3-7'	Prairie grass with purple flowers; blue-green blades turn tawny in Fall; high wildlife value
<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i> Columbine	Moist-Dry	x	x						sun-shade	2'	Red and yellow flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies; blue-green, elegant divided foliage
<i>Asclepias incarnata</i> Swamp Milkweed	Saturated-Moist			x	x				full sun-part shade	2-4'	Flowering plant that produces pink blooms in midsummer; butterfly nectar plant
<i>Aster novae angliae</i> New England Aster	Saturated-Dry				x	x	x	x	full sun-part shade	1-6'	Violet flowers attract butterflies; good food source for birds and mammals
<i>Astilbe spp</i> Astilbe	Moist		x	x	x	x			filtered sun-part shade	1.5-3'	Plumed sprays above fernlike foliage; requires moist, nutrient rich soils (non-native)
<i>Chasmanthium latifolium</i> Northern Sea Oats	Moist-Dry				x	x	x		sun-part shade	2-3'	Broad-bladed grass resembles bamboo; bright green in Spring; turns copper in Fall and tan in Winter; dangling "oats"; tolerates dry shade (US native, not NY native)
<i>Chelone glabra</i> White Turtlehead	Saturated-Moist				x	x	x		full sun-part shade	2-3'	Snapdragon-type white flowers provide nectar for hummingbirds and butterflies; Baltimore checkerspot butterfly host plant
<i>Chelone obliqua</i> Pink Turtlehead	Saturated-Moist				x	x	x		full sun-part shade	1-4'	Snapdragon-type pink flowers provide nectar for hummingbirds and butterflies; Baltimore checkerspot butterfly host plant
<i>Cimicifuga racemosa</i> Black Snakeroot	Moist				x	x	x	x	full sun-part shade	3-8'	Bold woodland edge plant with white, wand-like blooms. Handsome foliage
<i>Eupatorium fistulosum</i> Joe Pye Weed	Saturated-Dry				x	x	x		sun-part shade	1.5-6'	Huge dusty-pink flowers attract butterflies; good food source for birds and mammals, good fall color
<i>Geranium maculatum</i> Cranesbill	Moist-Dry	x	x	x	x	x			full sun-part shade	8-18"	Semi-evergreen fragrant foliage is scarlet to crimson in cold weather; lavender-blue or pink flowers
<i>Iris versicolor</i> Blue Flag Iris	Saturated		x	x	x				full sun-part shade	2-4'	Deep blue blooms on attractive grass-like foliage; spreads rapidly; butterfly nectar plant; can grow with roots in water
<i>Liatris spicata</i> Spiked Gay-feather	Moist				x	x	x		full sun-part shade	1-5'	Easy to grow perennial with tall spikes of lavender blooms, foliage is grass like; butterfly nectar plant; birds eat seeds (not native to NY)



Spiked Gay-feather



Black Snakeroot



Cranesbill Geranium



New England Aster

Continued on back page



# Rain Garden Plants



A selection of  
Plants for

## Rain Gardens

Species/Common Name	Soil Moisture	Bloom Time								Exposure	Mature Size	Comments
		April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct				
<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i> Cardinal Flower	Saturated-Moist			x	x	x				full sun-part shade	1-5'	Will grow in average moist garden soil; butterfly and hummingbird nectar plant; brilliant red flowers
<i>Lobelia siphilitica</i> Great Blue Lobelia	Saturated-Moist					x	x	x		sun-shade	1-3'	Although flowers are blue, they attract hummingbirds; native but can spread rapidly
<i>Mertensia virginica</i> Virginia Bluebells	Moist		x	x						full sun-part shade	1-2'	Woodland flower that does not tolerate dry condition; pink flowers turn blue; entire plant dies back by midsummer
<i>Monarda didyma</i> Beebalm	Moist			x	x	x	x			full sun-part shade	2-3'	May mildew in dry weather; divide periodically, can spread rapidly; fragrant foliage, scarlet flowers; nectar plant for hummingbirds, butterflies
<i>Onoclea sensibilis</i> Sensitive Fern	Saturated-Moist									sun-shade	1-2'	Easy to grow; spreads rapidly; fronds turn rusty-gold in Fall; fertile fronds persist through Winter
<i>Oenothera fruticosa</i> Narrow Sundrops	Moist to Dry			x	x	x	x			sun	1-2'	Clear yellow flowers give this plant its name; birds eat seeds; basal rosette is evergreen, burgundy in cold weather
<i>Osmunda cinnamomea</i> Cinnamon Fern	Saturated-Moist									sun-shade	2-3'	Needs constant soil moisture if in sun; attractive cinnamon-colored fertile fronds
<i>Osmunda regalis</i> Royal Fern	Saturated-Moist									sun-shade	2-3'	Tolerates full sun if moist; good yellow-gold Fall color
<i>Panicum virgatum</i> Switch Grass	Saturated-Dry				x	x	x	x		sun	3-6'	Flowers appear to float; high wildlife value; yellow Fall color, buff in Winter, excellent wildlife habitat; songbirds eat seed
<i>Rudbeckia laciniata</i> Green-headed Coneflower	Saturated-Dry				x	x	x			sun-part shade	1.5-9'	Yellow flowers with drooping rays and green eyes provide seeds for birds
<i>Solidago rugosa</i> Rough Goldenrod	Saturated-Dry					x	x	x		sun	1-6'	Does not cause hay fever; butterfly nectar plant, seeds taken by many birds; spreads rapidly; yellow flowers
<i>Tiarella cordifolia</i> Foamflower	Moist		x	x	x	x				sun-shade	1'	Early bloom of white; spreads rapidly



Based on the plant list from the Prince Georges County Bioretention Manual

Switch Grass



Cardinal Flower

Great Blue Lobelia



Foamflower

Joe Pye Weed



Funding is provided by an Onondaga Lake Partnership "Mini-Grant" through EPA Region II, and USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service Regional Water Quality Project, Region 2.



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Onondaga County

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities.

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities. Employment and program opportunities are offered to all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability.