



Great Plants for Rain Gardens

This plant list provides a good starting point to help you become familiar with some native plants that are good for rain gardens. Most of the plants listed below are native specifically to the Mid-Atlantic region, although there are some that are native more to the mid-western region of the United States. This list is not a comprehensive planting guide, as the exact plants for each rain garden will vary depending on how much water the garden will hold, the exposure (sun or shade) and the soil conditions. The woody plants listed are for the most part shrubs and smaller trees. There are a good number of larger trees that will easily withstand wet conditions (such as river birch, sweet gum, and black gum). However, this list was developed with the average size residential rain garden in mind, which would typically be using smaller scale plant material. The perennials and grasses selected for this list were chosen for their ability to withstand fluctuating water levels in primarily sun to partial sun exposure. There are many native plants that are typically found in more shaded environments in soil with a high amount of organic matter. Such plants would not be suitable for a raingarden unless the exposure and soil conditions can match the needs of those plants. Also, there are other plants (trees, shrubs, and herbaceous) suitable for rain gardens that just didn't make it onto this list. Remember, plants are dynamic and the water level that a plant can withstand is variable, even for plants that are very water tolerant. Be sure to consider sun/shade exposure as well as the depth of the raingarden when making plant selections. Happy rain gardening!!

Zone 1-Wet Zone

This area will be the deepest and hold the most water for the most amount of time. The plants listed below are tolerant of inundated (flooded) conditions upwards of six inches, meaning that they can tolerate standing water for a period of time. The raingarden should be designed so that water infiltrates within 24 hours.

Shrubs:

Arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*)*
Black chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*)*
Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)*
Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*)*
Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*)*
Possumhaw (*Viburnum nudum*)*
St. Johnswort (*Hypericum densiflorum*)*
Silky dogwood (*Cornus amomum*)*
Smooth alder (*Alnus serrulata*)*
Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)*
Swamp azalea (*Rhododendron viscosum*)
Swamp rose (*Rosa palustris*)
Wild raisin (*Viburnum cassinoides*)*
Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)*

Perennials and Ferns

Blue flag iris (*Iris versicolor*)
Blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*)*
Boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)*
Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)*
Cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*)*
Golden ragwort (*Senecio aureus*)*
Goldenrod (*Solidago patula*, *S. rugosa*)*
Great blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)*
Green bullrush (*Scirpus atrovirens*)
Horsetail (*Equisetum* species)
Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*)*
Monkey flower (*Mimulus ringens*)
New England aster (*Aster novae-anglia*)*
New York aster (*Aster novi-belgii*)



Zone 1 - Continued

Perennials (cont)

Royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*)
Seedbox (*Ludwigia alternifolia*)
Sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*)*
Sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*)*
Soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) *
Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)*
Swamp rose mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*)
Swamp sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*)*
Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)*
Tussock sedge (*Carex stricta*)
White turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)*
Woolgrass (*Scirpus cyperinus*)*

Large Trees:

Bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)*
Birch (*Betula lenta*, *Betula nigra*)*
Black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*)*
Black willow (*Salix nigra*)*
Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*)*
Pin oak (*Quercus palustris*)

Pond pine (*Pinus palustris*)*
Red maple (*Acer rubrum*)
Swamp oak (*Quercus bicolor*)
Sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)*
Sycamore (*Plantanus occidentalis*)*

Note: Species noted with an asterisk () are also typically suitable for Zone 2 of the rain garden.

Zone 2-Mesic (middle) Zone

This area will hold water but will drain much sooner than Zone 1. This zone is likely to hold several inches of water during and immediately after a rain event, depending on construction of the raingarden.

Trees

Fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*)
Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*)
Paw paw (*Asimina triloba*)
Red maple (*Acer rubrum*)
Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*,
A. canadensis and *A. laevis*)

Shrubs

American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*)
Broad-leaved meadowsweet (*Spiraea latifolia*)
Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*)
Narrow-leaved meadowsweet (*Spiraea alba*)
Red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)
Sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*)
Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*)



Zone 2 Continued

Perennials

Blue false indigo (<i>Baptisia australis</i>)	
Blue star (<i>Amsonia tabernaemontana</i>)	Culvers root (<i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i>)
Boltonia (<i>Boltonia asteroides</i>)	Mistflower (<i>Eupatorium coelestinum</i>)
Bottlebrush grass (<i>Hystrix patula</i>)	Obedient plant (<i>Physotegia virginiana</i>)
Broomsedge (<i>Andropogon virginicus</i>)	Threadleaf coreopsis (<i>Coreopsis verticillata</i>)

Note: See also the plants listed in Zone 1 marked with an asterisk (*).

Zone 3-Transition Zone

The upper or transition zone between the rain garden and the non-garden area. This area will receive water infrequently; during very heavy rain events and will drain the fastest. It will be the most similar to typical garden areas, depending on the individual's watering practices. Almost any typical garden plant will work in this zone. Just be sure to use native plants to enhance wildlife habitat.



Shrubs:

American cranberry bush (*Viburnum trilobum*)
 Black chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*)
 Bush cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*)
 Fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*)
 Gray Dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*)
 New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*)
 St. Johnswort (*Hypericum densiflorum*)
 Sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*)
 Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*)
 Witch hazel (*Hammamelis virginiana*)
 Yellow root (*Xanthorrhiza simplicissima*)

Trees

Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia* and *A. parviflora*)
 Carolina silverbell (*Halesia caroliniana*)
 Staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*)



Zone 3 Continued

Perennials

Anise hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)
Blazing star (*Liatris spicata*)
Blue star (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*)
Boltonia (*Boltonia asteroides*)
Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
Calico aster (*Aster lateriflorus*)
Evening primrose (*Oenothera speciosa*)
Golden aster (*Chrysopsis mariana*)
Green and gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*)
Mistflower (*Eupatorium coelestinum*)
Threadleaf coreopsis (*Coreopsis verticillata*)
Tickseed (*Coreopsis tinctoria*)

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*Created by Lauri Danko, March 2005, Revised June 2006
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