

How to make a rain garden

Already established in the US, a garden designed to absorb excess rain water can help prevent flash floods

Making a rain garden need not be complex. Roof water is low in pollutants whereas street run-off will need a specialised landscape feature (often called a swale) containing engineered soils to enhance filtration. A project should be seen as an intervention in water's route to drainage, rather than a complete diversion. There will be times when the garden overflows. This irony should not be overlooked — a pipe or drainage channel can be factored into the design.

A further proviso is a simple percolation test. Dig a hole about 25cm deep, fill it with water, let it drain and then top it up. Time how long it takes to drain the second time. If the water drops by 5cm per hour or more the site is suitable.



An East of Eden rain planter

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If you lack the space, there are more compact options. Companies specialising in biophilic and eco-friendly designs, such as East of Eden Plants, can make bespoke rain garden containers. These connect to a downpipe to direct water into the planter. A soil-compost mix in the top of the container absorbs and stores the rainwater, much of which is taken up by

suitable planting. Excess rainwater filters through a gravel layer and flows out via a pipe to a drain.