

a rain garden is just that — a garden!

It should be beautiful and have four seasons of interest. Many gardens rely solely on perennials. This looks nice in the summer, maybe the fall, but often looks barren come winter. A well-designed garden looks nice in all seasons. Use a combination of woody plants (evergreen and deciduous) and perennials. Of course, weeding and mulching are necessary to maintain any garden.

what to plant?

Plants in a rain garden need to be both drought tolerant and able to withstand short periods of flooding. The plants may not flower and grow as much during times of water stress, but they will flower again and resume growing when the stress is removed. Rain garden plants are more than just tough, they absorb water and nutrients, removing pollutants before they end up in our water supplies. Also, they add beauty to our landscapes with their flowers and foliage.

sun vs. shade?

When locating your rain garden, take note of the surrounding light conditions. Does the area stay in full sun or shade? Does it receive a bit of both? This will help determine which type of plants you will need. A sun garden receives at least six hours of sunlight per day, while a shade garden receives practically none. Many plants will do well in between these two ends of the continuum. We list the plants as **sun**, **part sun**, **shade** or a range between these three.

native vs. non-native?

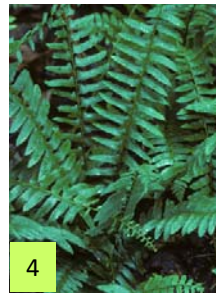
There are reasons for both:

- Natives are preferable if providing wildlife habitat is a goal.
- Our developed landscapes may not meet the soil and temperature needs of some natives.
- Avoid invasive, colonizing or thicketing plants, whether native or non-native.



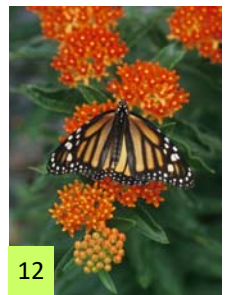
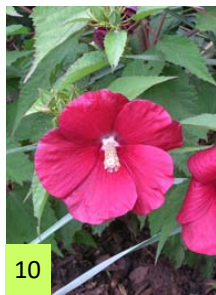
the plants:

The plants on the following pages are just a sampling of rain garden plants. Please use the resources section to locate hundreds and thousands more plants, many of which have multiple varieties. A **deciduous** plant will lose its leaves in the winter, while an **evergreen** plant will hold its leaves throughout the year. **Perennials** usually die back to the ground during the winter, but will come back in the spring. **Dimensions are given as height x width** (height alone for groundcovers and vines). The non-native plants are underlined.



perennials:

1. River oats ♦ *Chasmanthium latifolium* ♦ **sun to shade** ♦ perennial grass (winter interest) ♦ 3' x 2'
2. Muhly grass ♦ *Muhlenbergia capillaris* ♦ **sun** ♦ perennial grass (winter interest) ♦ 3' x 3'
3. Switch grass ♦ *Panicum virgatum* ♦ **sun** ♦ perennial grass (winter interest) ♦ 3' x 2'
4. Christmas fern ♦ *Polystichum acrostichoides* ♦ **part sun to shade** ♦ semi-evergreen (winter interest) ♦ 2' x 2'
5. Cinnamon fern ♦ *Osmunda cinnamomea* ♦ **part sun to shade** ♦ perennial ♦ 3' x 3'
6. Carolina phlox ♦ *Phlox carolina* ♦ **sun** ♦ perennial ♦ 36" x 18"
7. Coneflower ♦ *Echinacea purpurea* ♦ **sun** ♦ perennial ♦ 2-3' x 2' (in many colors)
8. Black-eyed Susan ♦ *Rudbeckia fulgida* ♦ **sun** ♦ perennial ♦ 18-30" x 2' (also other species of varying heights)
9. Narrow-leaved sunflower ♦ *Helianthus angustifolius* ♦ **sun** ♦ perennial ♦ 4-8' x 3-4'
10. Rose mallow ♦ *Hibiscus moscheutos* ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ perennial ♦ 3' x 4' (also 6' tall *H. coccineus*)
11. Siberian iris ♦ *Iris sibirica* ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ perennial ♦ 2-3' x 1'
12. Milkweed ♦ *Asclepia tuberosa* ♦ **sun** ♦ perennial ♦ 2-3' x 2'

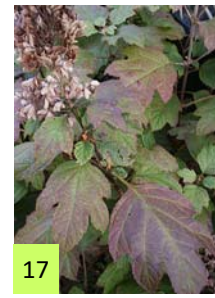
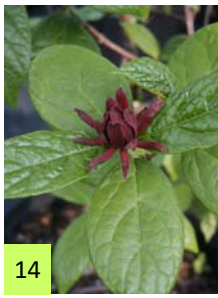


resources:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping: www.fws.gov/chesapeakebay/pdf/NativePlantsforWildlifeHabitatandConservationLandscaping.pdf.

NC State University Cooperative Extension: Landscaping for Wildlife with Native Plants: content.ces.ncsu.edu/landscaping-for-wildlife-with-native-plants.

NC State Cooperative Extension rain garden plants: extensiongardener.ces.ncsu.edu/extgardener-rain-garden-plant-list.



shrubs — deciduous:

13. American beautyberry ♦ *Callicarpa americana* ♦ **sun to shade** ♦ deciduous ♦ 8' x 6'
14. Sweet Betsy ♦ *Calycanthus floridus* ♦ **sun to shade** ♦ deciduous ♦ 8' x 10'
15. Summersweet clethra ♦ *Clethra alnifolia* ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ deciduous ♦ 8' x 6'
16. Smooth hydrangea 'Annabelle' ♦ *Hydrangea arborescens* ♦ **part sun to shade** ♦ deciduous ♦ 5' x 6'
17. Oakleaf hydrangea ♦ *Hydrangea quercifolia* ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ deciduous ♦ 10' x 12'
18. Virginia sweetspire ♦ *Itea virginica* ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ deciduous ♦ 6' x 7'

shrubs — evergreen:

19. Yaupon holly ♦ *Ilex vomitoria* ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ evergreen ♦ 10-15' x 8-10'
20. Inkberry holly ♦ *Ilex glabra* ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ evergreen s 5' x 5'
21. Anise ♦ *Illicium floridanum* ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ evergreen ♦ 10' x 8'
22. Southern wax myrtle ♦ *Myrica cerifera* ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ evergreen ♦ 10-15' x 10-15'
23. Abelia ♦ *Abelia grandiflora* ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ semi-evergreen ♦ 3-6' x 3-6'
24. Doghobble ♦ *Leucothoe axillaris* ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ evergreen ♦ 2-4' x 3-5'

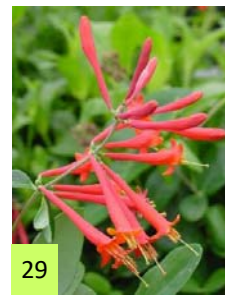
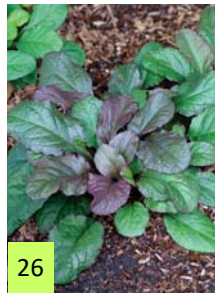
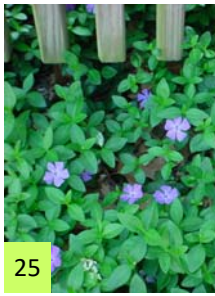


resources:

Use an online search engine, like Google or Bing, to find images of many different species.

Find more information on plants at:

- NC Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox: <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu>.
- USDA Plants Database: plants.usda.gov.

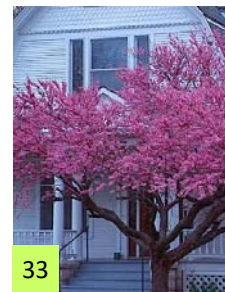
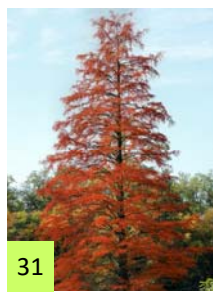


groundcovers and vines:

- 25. Periwinkle ♦ Vinca minor ♦ **part sun to shade** ♦ groundcover ♦ evergreen ♦ 4-6" tall
- 26. Bugleweed ♦ Ajuga reptans ♦ **sun to shade** ♦ groundcover ♦ evergreen ♦ 3-6" tall
- 27. Dwarf crested iris ♦ Iris cristata ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ groundcover ♦ deciduous ♦ 6" tall
- 28. Carolina jessamine ♦ Gelsemium sempervirens ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ vine ♦ evergreen ♦ 10-20'
- 29. Trumpet honeysuckle ♦ Lonicera sempervirens ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ vine ♦ semi-evergreen ♦ 15-25'

trees:

- 30. Sweetbay ♦ Magnolia virginiana ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ tree ♦ evergreen ♦ 60' x 30'
- 31. Bald cypress ♦ Taxodium distichum ♦ **sun** ♦ tree ♦ deciduous ♦ 70' x 40'
- 32. Fringe tree ♦ Chionanthus virginicus ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ tree ♦ deciduous ♦ 20-30' x 20'
- 33. Red bud ♦ Cercis canadensis ♦ **sun to part sun** ♦ tree ♦ deciduous ♦ 20-35' x 30'



room for trees:

If you have room to plan for a tree in your garden's future, you can plant it now and let it take the place of a shrub until it matures. Many trees will do great in a rain garden. You can plant perennials and shrubs with it and plan to remove them in the future. Like the many colors and sizes of perennials, some trees have been bred to grow smaller than their wild cousins.