Plants for Rain Gardens

Soil conditions in rain gardens alternate between wet and dry, making them tough places for many plants to grow. The following plants are adapted to these conditions, though some plants will tolerate more moisture than others. Each plant is marked according to its flooding tolerance, with 3's being tolerant of longer flooding, 2's only tolerating brief flooding, and 1's indicate plants that tolerant extended drought once established.

All of these plants are native to the southeastern United States in wetland habitats and most are readily available at local nurseries. Wetland plants can generally grow well in moist or well-drained soils, whereas plants adapted to dry soils rarely survive in soggy conditions. How wet a rain garden stays will vary considerably depending on the site where it is installed. Rain gardens created on sandy soils will rarely hold water for more than a few hours. On these sites it is most important to choose plants for their drought tolerance. Rain gardens created on loamy or silty soils could pond water for 2-4 days (if your site ponds water for more than 5 days, you should consider creating a wetland). On these sites, choosing plants tolerant of extended flooding is critical to success.

Remember you are not limited to planting just within the excavated area! Extending plantings around this area will help the rain garden to blend in with the overall landscape. Any plants adapted to the site conditions can be used outside of the excavated area.

Large Trees (over 30' tall)

Deciduous

Red Maple (2) – *Acer rubrum*
River Birch (1,3) – *Betula nigra*
Green Ash (3) – *Fraxinux pennsylvanica*
Black Gum (2) – *Nyssa sylvatica*
Willow Oak (1,2) – *Quercus phellos*
Willows (3) – *Salix* species
Bald Cypress (1,3) – *Taxodium ascendens*
Nutall Oak (1,2) – *Quercus nuttalii*

Evergreen

Atlantic White Cedar (1,3) – *Chamaecyparis thyoides*
Southern Magnolia (1,2) – *Magnolia grandiflora*
Longleaf Pine (1,2) – *Pinus palustris*
Swamp Laurel Oak (3) – *Quercus laurifolia*

Small Trees (under 30' tall)

Deciduous

Redbud (1,2) – *Cercis canadensis*
Fringe Tree (2) – *Chionanthus virginicus*
Washington Hawthorn (3) – *Crataegus phaenopyrum*
Possumhaw (1,3) - *Ilex decidua*

Evergreen

American Holly (1,2) – *Ilex opaca*
Red Cedar (1,2) – *Juniperus virginiana*
Sweet Bay (3) – *Magnolia virginiana*
Red Bay (1,2) – *Persea borbonia*
Evergreen shrubs that can be grown as small trees include Yaupon, Wax Myrtle, and Anise Shrub.

Shrubs

Deciduous

Chokeberry (1,3) – *Aronia arbutifolia*
Beautyberry (2) – *Callicarpa americana*
Sweet Shrub (2) – *Calycanthus floridus*
Buttonbush (3) – *Cephalanthus occidentalis*
Pepperbush (2) – *Clethra alnifolia*
Fothergilla (2) – *Fothergilla gardenii*
Winterberry (3) – *Ilex verticillata*
Virginia Willow (3) – *Itea virginica*
Possumhaw (3) – *Viburnum nudum*

Evergreen

Inkberry (2) – *Ilex glabra*
Yaupon (1,2) – *Ilex vomitoria*
Anise Shrub (1,2) – *Illicium parviflorum*
Wax Myrtle (1,2) – *Myrica cerifera*
Dwarf Palmetto (3) – *Sabal minor*

Perennials

Blue Star (3) – *Amsonia tabernaemontana*
Swamp Milkweed (3) – *Asclepias incarnata*
Climbing Aster (3) – *Aster carolinianus*
False Indigo (1,2) – *Baptisia species*
Boltonia (3) – *Boltonia asteriodes*
Turtlehead (3) – *Chelone glabra*
Tickseed (1,2) – *Coreopsis lanceolata*
Joe Pye Weed (3) – *Eupatorium dubium*
Swamp Sunflower (3) – *Helianthus angustifolius*
Swamp Mallow (3) – *Hibiscus moscheutos*
Texas Star (3) – *Hibiscus coccineus*
Seashore Mallow (3) – *Kosteletskya virginica*
Gayfeather (2) – *Liatris spicata*
Cardinal Flower (3) – *Lobelia cardinalis*
Garden Phlox (2) – *Phlox paniculata*
Rudbeckia (1,2) – *Rudbeckia fulgida*
Green Headed Coneflower (3) – *Rudbeckia laciniata*
Goldenrod (3) – *Solidago rugosa*
Stoke's Aster (2) – *Stokesia laevis*
Ironweed (3) – *Vernonia novaboracensis*
Verbena (1,2) – *Verbena canadensis*

Ornamental Grasses

River Oats (1,3) – *Chasmanthium latifolium*
Muhly Grass (1,2) – *Muhlenbergia capillaris*
Panic Grass (1,3) – *Panicum virgatum*
Indiangrass (1,2) – *Sorghastrum nutans*

Non-native perennials and ornamental grasses suitable for rain gardens include: Liriope (1,2) (*Liriope muscarii* and *L. spicata*), Siberian Iris (2) (*Iris sibirica*), Daylily (1,2) (*Hemerocallis* hybrids), Rain Lilies (3) (*Zephyranthes* species), Crinum Lilies (3) (*Crinum* species), and Maiden Grass (1,2) (*Miscanthus* cultivars).

1 = Plants that once established* can withstand considerable drought (3-4 weeks without rainfall)
2 = Plants that grow best in moist to average soils and will only tolerate short periods (1-2 days) of flooding.
3 = Plants that will tolerate longer periods of flooding (3-5 days), but will also grow in moist to average soils.

*Establishment usually takes 1-2 years for trees and shrubs and 1 year for perennials.

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PROJECT #:	SCALE:
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