Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District

Conservation Series

Landscape Solutions

Rainwater collects on land because of soil types, location, and upstream issues. For many drainage problems that do not threaten a structure there may be some alternatives to more costly engineering solutions. These alternatives reduce the amount of stormwater going to streams as well. In the future these options will become more popular as we are forced to decrease runoff to downstream areas. Below are some practical and natural options for eliminating extra water. Possible solutions vary from property to property and with landowners' expectations.

The Right Tree in the Right Place

Trees can reduce the amount of water running into streams or puddling in wet spots. For example, a mature oak tree can take up about 300 gallons of water a day during the growing season. Additional rainfall is retained on the leaf surface and evaporates before it can even reach the ground. The right trees need to be planted in the right spots. Contact OSU Extension or a local nursery to find out what trees like or tolerate wet soils.

Encourage Water-Tolerant Species

If grass is not growing in wet spots on your lawn, consider planting water-tolerant species, such as inkberry or silky dogwood. This will reduce lawn maintenance cost and attract wildlife. For information you can contact OSU Extension or a local nursery for the right plants. Check with Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Natural Areas and Preserves for the most up to date information on native and invasive plants. A small depression or swale may give you the opportunity to install a mini-wetland. If the area is 20,000 square feet or more you may be eligible for design assistance from our office.

Rain Barrels

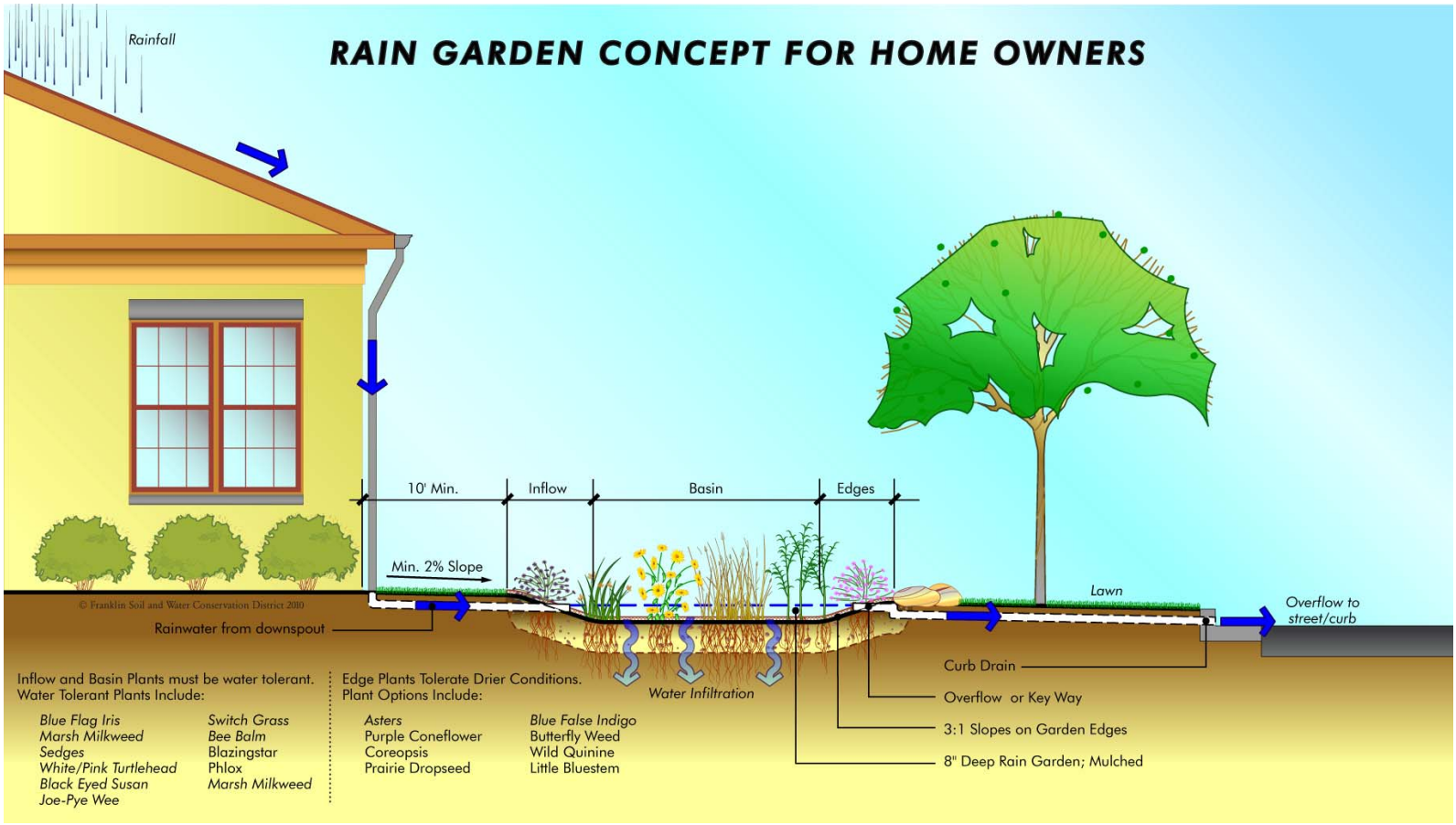
These containers are used to collect rainwater from rooftops and store it for later uses such as watering gardens or lawns. Collecting rainwater prevents large amounts of runoff, which carry pollutants such as oil and other contaminants into waterways. Collecting rainwater for lawns reduces the amount of water that has to be treated with chemicals such as chlorine. Most barrels come equipped with mesh screens, which keep out leaves, shingle grit and mosquitoes. They come in a variety of sizes and can be purchased at most major lawn and garden centers.

Make a Natural Water Feature

If there is a wet spot in your yard consider creating a water feature. Consult with a local nursery, landscaper, library, or Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District for this information.

Keep Structures out of Special Flood Hazard Areas

Many people build on areas known as Special Flood Hazard Areas, which is the first place water goes when a stream floods, not realizing the danger these structures are in. With the increase of impervious surfaces like blacktop and concrete these Special Flood Hazard Areas now have a greater risk of being flooded every year. There are programs available to officially set up protection in these areas such as conservation easements that have potential tax benefits. Call the District or visit the website for more information.



Divert Downspouts to Create a Rain Garden

Water from gutters is often diverted down a driveway or a spot near the corner of a house. You need to make sure these are directed away from the foundation of your house. Instead of running it to the nearest storm sewer, a stormwater garden, or bioretention area, can be constructed; see figure above. A stormwater garden functions by directing your downspouts downhill to a shallow grass channel or ditch, then to a collection of contained pea gravel meant to slow down and spread out the water into the garden. Once in the garden, the plants uptake the retained water and filter out pollutants. These areas can be an attractive feature while protecting stream water quality. Check out the "Better Site Design" handbook, available through the Center for Watershed Protection website at www.cwp.org.

References and Resources

Picture taken from Better Site Design: A Handbook for Changing Development Rules in Your Community, Center for Watershed Protection, August 1998, which was captioned from Design of Stormwater Filtering Systems, Claytor and Schueler, 1996. OSU Extension, web site: ohioline.ag.ohio-state.edu or call 614-462-6700.

Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District
Natural Resource Conservation Service
1328 Dublin Rd., Suite 101, Columbus, OH 43215
(614) 486-9613 voice, (614) 486-9614 fax
www.franklinswcd.org

NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service
www.oh.nrcs.usda.gov