

# DEMO RAIN GARDEN

## Steuben County

PURDUE EXTENSION  
**RAINSCAPING  
EDUCATION  
PROGRAM**

### Background Information

---

This rain garden was created in a grassy area near the Wild Turkey Shelter, which is located in a 3,000 sq ft acre of wildland and recreational area. This area was chosen because there is a drainage pipe directly in front of it that releases water near Gentian Lake. This rain garden could aid with reducing pollutants through filtration.



Immediately before installation occurred, the area received a large amount of rain. It had rained six inches in three weeks; therefore, the installation was delayed so the area could dry. Erosion was reduced by adding straw blankets during installation and large rocks were placed in the middle due to higher rates of water flow.

The rain garden in this case mostly has an ecological impact, as the primary goal is to filter pollutants from entering the nearby lake.

Wild Geranium



Common Sneezeweed



Blazing Star



# Demo Rain Garden: Steuben County

## Garden Design: Plantings and Information

Plant Scientific Name	Common Name	Number Used
<i>Chelone glabra</i>	White Turtlehead	20
<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	Marsh Milkweed	7
<i>Helenium autumnale</i>	Common Sneezeweed	5
<i>Carex vulpinoidea</i>	Fox Sedge	22
<i>Geranium maculatum</i>	Wild Geranium	12
<i>Liatris</i>	Blazing Star	8
<i>Eutrochium purpureum</i>	Sweet Joe Pye Weed	16



# Demo Rain Garden: Steuben County

## Maintenance Plan: Establishment Period

---

- The garden should be weeded every 2-4 weeks for first six months, then tentatively once a month thereafter.
- Tracking progress of the garden:
  - If desired, a before and after photo of the garden should be taken when it is weeded to help keep track of what should be weeded and what plants should not be removed.
  - Taking a photo of your garden every few weeks will allow one to visually see the maturation of the garden over time; photos could be uploaded to a computer or printed and kept in a photo album to keep as part of the educational display.

## Maintenance Plan: General Maintenance

---

- Fertilizer
  - Some starter fertilizer could be used on the site due to low potassium levels. Otherwise, the native plants should adapt to the soil type on site.
- Watering
  - From installation for about a month – water as weeded; about 30 minutes – make sure everything's moist.
  - Once plants are established, you should not need to water them except during prolonged dry periods (about one week).
  - If excessive rain is experienced, it is advised to temporarily reroute some incoming water away from the garden by cutting a notch in the berm. Large, mature plants handle saturation better than young, small plants.
  - Water from the rain barrels can be used to water the garden, but in case of a dry period a hose and/or sprinkler system may be used.
- Weeding
  - During the first few establishment years, weeding should take place every month as needed. Over time, the plants will fill in and weeding won't be necessary.
  - Hand pulling of weeds should be sufficient.
  - Weeding will be provided by the office or its grounds crew.
- Mulch
  - It should be coarse, double shredded hardwood or another alternative which does not easily float.
  - Approximately 3 inches should be maintained in the garden at all times.

# Demo Rain Garden: Steuben County

## Maintenance Plan: Establishment Period

---

*This is namely for after the two-three year establishment period, but should still be carried out during those first two years.*

- Year-round
  - Keep drain clear and garden clean of garbage
  - Weed (except winter)
- Spring
  - Prune dead vegetation and plants that have grown too large
  - Weed the garden and add mulch if needed
  - Remove excess sediment (i.e. leaves, sticks, debris) that may have collected over winter
  - Remove dead stalks/seed heads from previous season
  - Replenish mulch layer to maintain 3 inch layer
  - Best time to plant new/different plants and replace plants that may have died over winter
    - Plugs establish more successfully than seeds
- Summer
  - Remove weeds (i.e. crabgrass, dandelions etc.)
  - Water during dry periods (based on whether National Weather service declares drought; if no rain for one week)
  - Monitor berm around edge of garden for erosion
- Fall
  - Do not remove (too many) leaves that may have fallen into the garden – leaves will provide compost material for following spring growth; layer of leaves is fine but mounds of leaves are not
  - Remove weeds and diseased plants
  - If fall is dry continue to water until grounds begin to freeze (late October)
- Winter
  - No maintenance is needed; can cut back rain garden to clean up for spring if wanted
  - You should check to make sure garden is clean of garbage, leaves, etc. every few weeks

# Demo Rain Garden: Steuben County

## Resource Contact

---

**Matt Lake** – Director of Merrillville Stormwater: 219-472-8668

**Nikky Witkowski** – Lake County Purdue Extension: 219-755-3240

**Julie Duttlinger** – Soil and Water Conservation District: 219-663-7042

## About the Purdue Rainscaping Education Program

---

The Purdue Rainscaping Education Program offers state-wide training for Purdue Master Gardeners, conservation agencies and organizations, stormwater professionals, and landscape companies and consultants.

The two day workshop sessions cover an introduction to rainscaping and rain gardens with specific modules for rain garden site selection, plant selection and garden design, installation, maintenance, and community engagement.

Workshops include hands-on activities, interactive discussions, and field trips to community rainscaping projects. Participants also gain experience through creation of a demonstration rain garden with community partners in a public space.

