BOWA Builders, Inc.

HOME ADVISOR

Dear Friend,

Each month, BOWA Home Advisor provides you with important tips on how to improve and protect your home's value. We hope the following is helpful.

April Showers, Bring...Rain Gardens?

Like it or not, with the rainy season upon us, each of us poses a potential threat to our local waterways. How so? Traditional drainage systems concentrate stormwater runoff from our roofs, driveways, lawns and patios, and remove it from our property via a system of gutters, curbs, pipes, sewers and channels. The result is large amounts of fast-moving and sometimes highly polluted (litter, pet waste, vehicle fluids, fertilizers and pesticides) water making its way into our local rivers, streams and lakes.

The good news is, installing a rain garden or two in your yard is one of several ways you can help to improve our local waterways. Rain gardens use native plants and landscaping to help soak up stormwater that flows from downspouts or over compacted land or other impervious surfaces during a rain event. The center of the rain garden holds several inches of water, allowing the stormwater to slowly seep into the ground instead of flowing directly from your property. When executed properly, the plants, soils and soil-dwelling organisms work together to allow about 30% more water to soak into the ground, than a patch of conventional lawn, while being filtered naturally in the process.

If you decide to install a rain garden on your property, you may be able to do all of the steps yourself with just a bit of research, or you might enlist the help of a professional landscaper. Either way, there are just a few key steps to establishing an effective, environment-friendly rain garden.

Determine the Right Size: It is recommended that rain gardens range from 150 to 300 square feet. The appropriate size is determined by how deep the garden will be, the type of soil in the yard and the area of the roof/lawns that will drain into the garden.

Choosing the Location: It is recommended that rain gardens be located near downspouts and other areas of water flow on the property. Staying at least ten feet from

the foundation, the rain garden should be placed in the lowest point of this section of your lawn, while maintaining a minimum 1% slope down from the house. This will help to ensure that infiltrating water does not seep into the building.

Digging and Testing the Rain Garden: To enable the rain garden to hold several inches of water during a storm, the hole should be three-to-four inches deep across the entire surface of the rain garden. If need be, a deeper hole can be dug and a thin layer of organic material, such as peat or shredded hardwood mulch, can be added to improve absorption. The bottom should be level with a gentle slope up to the ground level. Once dug, test how the garden will hold water by letting water flow into the rain garden from a hose placed at the downspout. Based on this test, make any necessary adjustments, such as creating a berm on the lower side of the garden to prevent overflow.

Selecting the Appropriate Plants: Unless you have a green thumb, you might seek the help of a landscaper or garden center when selecting the proper plants for your rain garden. In general, the plantings should be native, deep-rooting species and should include a variety of perennials, grasses, trees and shrubs. As the garden will collect different amounts of water in different areas, be sure to choose your plants accordingly.

Maintaining your Rain Garden: During the first year of the garden, you'll need to commit to regular watering and weeding. Keep in mind that a young garden will need about an inch of water per week until it is established. As the plants mature, you will need to clean-up the garden by pruning, removing dead materials and replenishing the mulch each spring to maintain the optimal environment. Then in the fall, while you should remove some of the dead vegetation, you may opt to leave some of the seed-bearing plants for bird habitat in the winter.

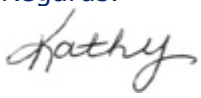
A well designed rain garden can virtually eliminate any harmful runoff during a light-to-moderate storm. With relatively little maintenance required, rain gardens are both visually appealing and an effective way to lower the impact of impervious surfaces and polluted runoff on our area's waterways.

P.S. Have a referral for BOWA? Let us know by April 15th, and you can win a luxurious getaway to Exclusive Resorts!

For your convenience, past issues of the *BOWA Home Advisor*, are available in the 'About Us' section of our web site.

If you would like more information on any of these topics or if there are other ways we can be of service, please contact BOWA Builders.

Regards.



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P.S. Have a specific issue you would like addressed in a future BOWA Home Advisor? Please let me know.

Forward email

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