# What Plants to Use?

## AQUATIC

**Blue flag Iris**
*Iris hexagona*
4 feet high x 3-5 feet wide

**Pickerel weed**
*Pontederia cordata*
3.5 feet high x 3.5 feet wide

## GRASSES

**Dwarf Fakahatchee**
*Tripsacum floridanum*
4 feet high x 4-6 feet wide

**Muhly grass**
*Muhlenbergia capillaris*
3 feet high x 3 feet wide

## GROUNDCOVERS

**Blue eyed grass**
*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*
2 feet high x 1-2 feet wide

**Sunshine mimosa**
*Mimosa strigillosa*
Turf Replacement
1-3 inch spread

## WILDFLOWERS

**Common tickseed**
*Coreopsis leavenworthii*
1-3 feet high x 1-3 feet wide

**Tropical sage**
*Salvia coccinea*
1-2 feet high

## SHRUBS

**Spider lily**
*Hymenocallis palmeri*
3 feet high x 3 feet wide

**Giant leather fern**
*Acrostichum danaeifolium*
12 feet high x 12 feet wide

**Key to Symbols:**

**SOIL MOISTURE:** Dry; Wet Sometimes; Wet All the Time

**SUNLIGHT:** Full; Partial; Shade

**ATTRACTS WILDLIFE:**

**ATTRACTS BUTTERFLIES:**

**POND LIFE:**

**Visit our websites to see a list of additional plant options:**
**www.sarasotabay.org**
**www.scgov.net**

# RAIN GARDENS & Bioswales

**Clean Water for People and Nature**

As our community grows and development increases, there will be more and more need to clean and retain stormwater for beneficial uses. This is your personal opportunity to be a part of the solution to replenish underground water supplies and treat stormwater before it leaves your property. Creating and maintaining rain garden and/or bioswale is a simple, attractive way that you can help.

For more information on rain gardens and bioswales, please contact:

**Sarasota Bay Estuary Program**
www.sarasotabay.org 941.955.8085

**Sarasota County government**
www.scgov.net 941.861.5000

**Other resources:**

**UF/IFAS Extension: Sarasota County Extension Service**
http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu/ 941.861.5000

**Florida Yards & Neighborhoods**
www.FloridaYards.org 941.861.5000

**City of Tallahassee: Rain Gardens**
www.tappwater.org/raingardens.aspx

**Florida Native Plant Society**
www.fnps.org 321.271.6702

**Association of Native Plant Nurseries**
www.afnn.org 877.352.2366

SARASOTA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM

Sarasota County

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# Creating a Rain Garden or Bioswale

Take an active role in reducing stormwater runoff and keeping our bays and waterways healthy by creating a rain garden or bioswale. Do you have a low spot in your yard where water puddles or a ditch or swale that is difficult to maintain or has standing water in it? If so, you may have the beginnings of a beautiful rain garden or bioswale.

## So What Exactly are Rain Gardens and Bioswales?

A **rain garden** can be part of your landscaped yard by removing sod and adding plants to a depressed area designed to capture and retain excess rainwater, allowing it to percolate into the ground or be used by the plants.

*Blue eyed grass and Blue flag Iris.*

The plant pallet for your rain garden should consist of a variety of native and bay friendly plants that can handle both wet and dry conditions. By using many different types of plants, you will increase the rain garden's beauty and functionality in controlling stormwater, while providing an attractive habitat for birds, butterflies and other wildlife.

A **bioswale** is a conventional ditch or swale, modified and planted with appropriate native and bay-friendly plants to increase water percolation and pollutant removal as stormwater flows through it. Like a rain garden it should be planted with a wide range of plants that can survive a combination of being wet or dry for extended periods.

A bioswale is not usually mowed; it acts as a retention area or flow-through filtration garden. Provide regular maintenance by hand to maintain drainage, manage plants, and remove weeds.

*Brochure cover image, at right, shows the completed bioswale.*

## How do Rain Gardens and Bioswales Work?

When rainwater runoff from your roof, gutters, driveway or sidewalk is directed toward your new rain garden, the process is just beginning. Remember to allow water to enter the rain garden slowly so it will not overwhelm the area. The larger the rain garden, the more water it will be able to hold. A well-designed rain garden should be 4-8 inches deep with all sod removed and soil loosened to enhance percolation.

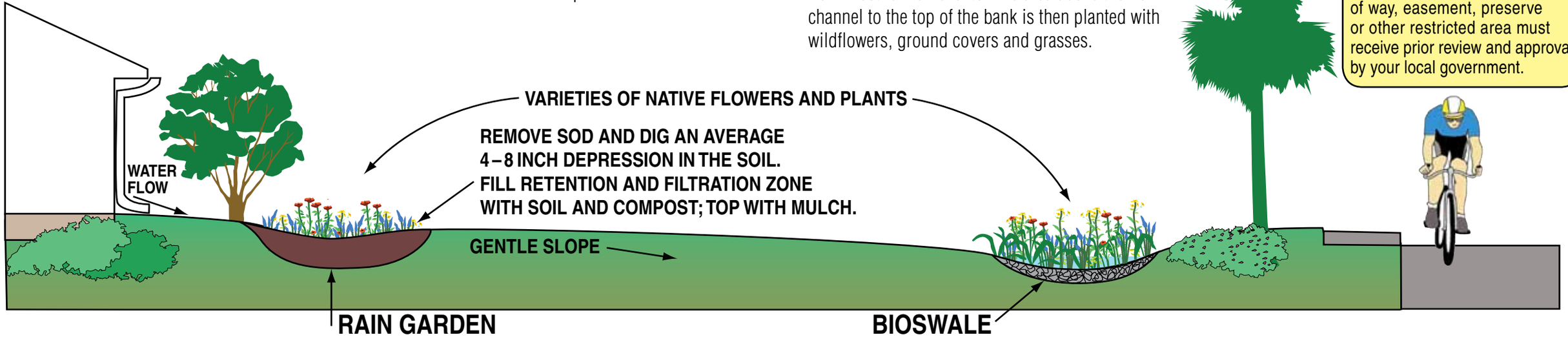
*Rain garden*

The area is then planted with selected vegetation and mulched to help capture water and discourage erosion. The combination of soil, plants and mulch provides a natural pollutant filter as water is used by the plants or soaks into the soil. The filtering and percolation process and plant uptake helps keep topsoil, fertilizers and pesticides on your property and out of local ponds and bays while adding beauty to your yard.

A bioswale functions as a flow-through rain garden in that it must be designed to allow water to percolate into the soil and pass through it during major storm events so that water does not back up and create flooding. Bioswales may be created using rock material for the central flow channel and then planting various types of wetland and semi-aquatic vegetation from the channel to the top of bank. Another method is to plant the central flow channel with wetland vegetation that will take up rainwater and pollutants from most rainfall events. The area above the flow channel to the top of the bank is then planted with wildflowers, ground covers and grasses.

During periods of heavy rain, the water may rise up in the flow channel of both sides to maintain flow. It is advisable to leave a 1-2 foot wide vegetated strip along the top of the bank to minimize soil erosion while the bioswale plants are established.

## Major Benefits of Rain Gardens and Bioswales for People and Nature:

- Increased rainwater ground infiltration and reduced stormwater run-off
- Reduced stormwater pollutants (fertilizers, pesticides, oils, etc.) that flow into local waterways
- More attractive landscaping and reduced lawn mowing maintenance
- Increased natural habitat for birds, butterflies and other wildlife

**IMPORTANT:** Any proposed planting or landscape modification in a public right of way, easement, preserve or other restricted area must receive prior review and approval by your local government.