

Plants

A Selection of Plants Suitable for Bog Gardens:

Native plants will thrive without further inputs once established in the right location. The following plants are suitable for moist areas in Great Lakes area gardens:

Jack in the pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) Unusual green/brown flowers featuring a spathe (pulpit) surrounding an upright spadix (Jack). Red berries. Up to 65 cm high.

Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) All milkweeds are host plants for Monarch butterfly caterpillars and nectar plants for other butterflies. Showy pink flowers in summer. 70-130 cm.

Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) Round white "pincushion" flowerballs in early summer. Butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds are attracted to the nectar. Seeds eaten by waterfowl, leaves/twigs by deer. Up to three metres high.

Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*) Charming white flowers bloom from late summer into fall. Food for Baltimore Checkerspot butterfly larvae. Attracts hummingbirds. Pollinated by bumblebees. One metre tall.

Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*) Loosely-spreading deciduous shrub with red twigs in winter. Important food for wildlife. Up to three metres high.

Spotted Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*) Pink-purple flower clusters. Blooms late summer. Provides food for a variety of butterflies (Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Great Spangled Fritillary, Silver-spotted Skipper) and other wildlife. One to two and a half metres high.

Blue Flag Iris (*Iris versicolor*) A lovely native iris with flowers ranging from pale to very dark blue. Blooms late spring. One metre plus.

Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) Brilliant red flowers that attract hummingbirds. Blooms late summer. 70-130 cm.

Swamp rose (*Rosa palustris*) Pink five-petalled flowers in early summer. Rosehips eaten by birds and other wildlife. One metre to two metres high.



Joe Pye Weed



Cardinal Flower



Red Osier Dogwood

Downspout Bog Gardens

RAINWATER AND NATIVE PLANTS...
A NATURAL CONNECTION



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Creating

Creating a downspout bog garden is a maintenance-free way to capture rainwater for your plants and reduce the quantity of water rushing into local waterways during storms. By including native plants in your garden you'll virtually eliminate the need for watering, fertilizing and pesticides.

Some of the most beautiful and unusual of our native plants thrive in moist conditions. It is, however, easy to create a small bog by re-directing rainwater from your rooftop. Once completed, a bog garden will look like any other but you will only need to water it during the most severe droughts.

Outline the shape of your bog garden and dig it out to a depth of one metre. The bottom of the plot should slope slightly away from the foundation of your house to direct excess moisture into your lawn or garden.

- Line the plot with plastic and poke a few holes several centimetres above the bottom to allow excess water to drain out.
- Refill the hole with a mixture of the excavated soil, peat moss, and other organic materials you have on hand (compost, pine needles). Many bog plants like a slightly acidic soil.
- Mound the soil somewhat to allow for settling.
- Wet the mix thoroughly.
- Cut your downspout and attach an elbow, and if necessary, an extension, to direct rainwater into your bog garden and away from your foundation. Most hardware stores carry an array of downspout extensions.
- Add your plants and get ready to enjoy a beautiful and unusual garden.



Conserving

Bog gardens are an alternative to rain barrels and an effective water conservation technique. Normally, water entering storm sewers flows out in a concentrated, and often polluted, rush at single points along nearby waterways. This rush of water can cause erosion, wash away fish-spawning beds and cause other damage to the waterways ecology. By re-directing storm water from your roof and other impermeable areas you can reduce the impact of rainwater entering nearby creeks.

The many impermeable surfaces (roads, sidewalks, driveways, patios, buildings...) in cities prevent rainwater from being absorbed into the land to recharge groundwater. Instead, rainwater and snowmelt run off these surfaces into sewers, picking up dirt, oils, pesticides, and other pollutants along the way. You can help to lessen the environmental damage by encouraging precipitation to stay where it falls... providing a reservoir of much-needed moisture for your trees and garden.

Rainwater is healthier than municipally-treated water for our gardens as some plants are sensitive to chlorine and other additives.

Here are some simple measures you can take to conserve rainwater:

- Disconnect your downspout and redirect the flow onto your lawn or into your garden, or save it in a rain barrel.
- Contour your landscape to direct rainfall/snowmelt away from hard surfaces, allowing the moisture to infiltrate into the ground.
- Remember, gardens absorb rain more quickly than lawns, trees more quickly than gardens. Plant in layers to create a more interesting landscape and a more moisture sensitive garden (add low plants and shrubs under trees).
- Use native plants purchased locally from ethical growers whenever possible. They need only what the local environment provides. Once they're established, no watering, fertilizing, or pesticides required!



Connecting