

FULL SUN RAIN GARDEN

Rain gardens are typically bowl-shaped landscape features, as shown below, that capture and absorb rainfall and snowmelt. These gardens help improve downstream water quality and recharge groundwater. However, not every plant is suited for rain gardens. Generally, they need plants that thrive during floods and tolerate droughts. This guide provides Illinois native plant species that are suited for these moisture conditions in full sun. It does not cover how to build a rain garden, which can be found by downloading the [Southern Lake Michigan Rain Garden Manual](#).



One strategy for people new to rain garden native plants is to start out with a limited number of species. More species can always be added later as you learn more about what works best in your space. While suggested plant lists and design templates can help, you can personalize your garden however you like, but be sure to check local municipal or HOA ordinances.

Below are two options for rain garden native plant combinations that feature only three species:

PRAIRIE DROPSEED

☀️ ☁️ 🌧️ 🌧️ 🌧️

BANK

'Kobold' BLAZING STAR

☀️ ☁️ 🌧️ 🌧️ 🌧️

SLOPE

SWAMP MILKWEED

☀️ ☁️ 🌧️ 🌧️ 🌧️

BASIN

PALM SEDGE

☀️ ☁️ 🌧️ 🌧️ 🌧️

BASIN

GREAT BLUE LOBELIA

☀️ ☁️ 🌧️ 🌧️ 🌧️

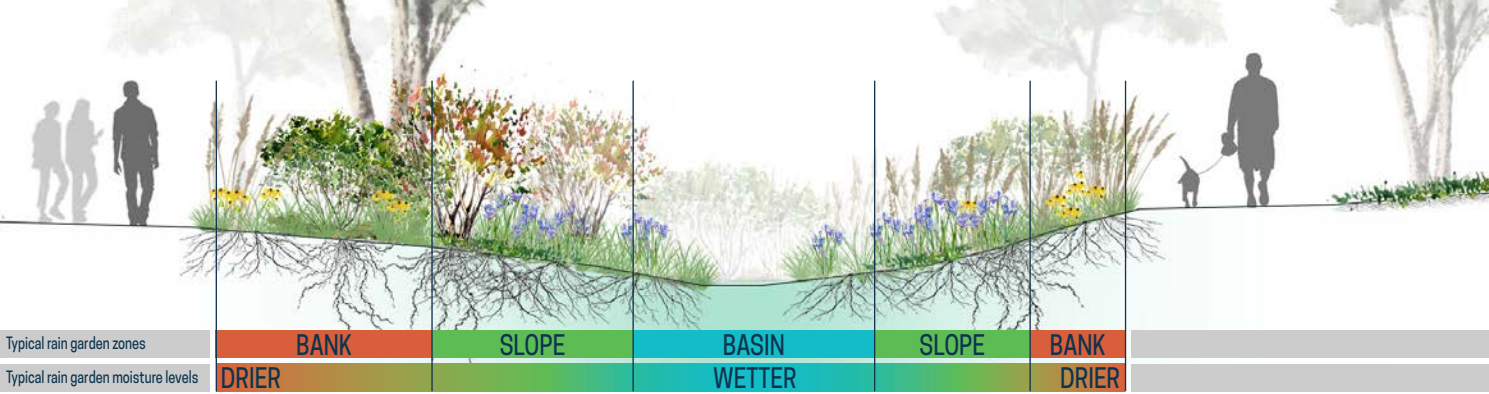
SLOPE

'Purple Dome' ASTER

☀️ ☁️ 🌧️ 🌧️ 🌧️

BANK

Planting zones can be broken down into three categories: bank, slope, and basin, as shown in this cross section of a typical rain garden.



WHERE TO FIND PLANTS AND MORE INFORMATION

The plant palette is inspired by the Red Oak Rain Garden: [RedOakRainGarden.org](#). The Illinois Native Plant Society webpage lists sources of native plants: [illinoisplants.org](#). For more information about plants, see the University of Illinois Extension Horticulture website: [extension.illinois.edu/global/horticulture](#).

PUT YOUR NATIVE PLANT GARDEN ON THE MAP

You can be part of a network of native plantings by registering your Illinois native plant garden or rain garden. This helps build community and encourage native plant use. Add your native plant garden to the map: [go.illinois.edu/GardenMap](#).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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FULL SUN RAIN GARDEN

A NATIVE PLANTING GUIDE FOR SUNNY RAIN GARDEN BEDS

INSPIRADO POR EL JARDÍN RED OAK RAIN GARDEN



FULL SUN RAIN GARDEN

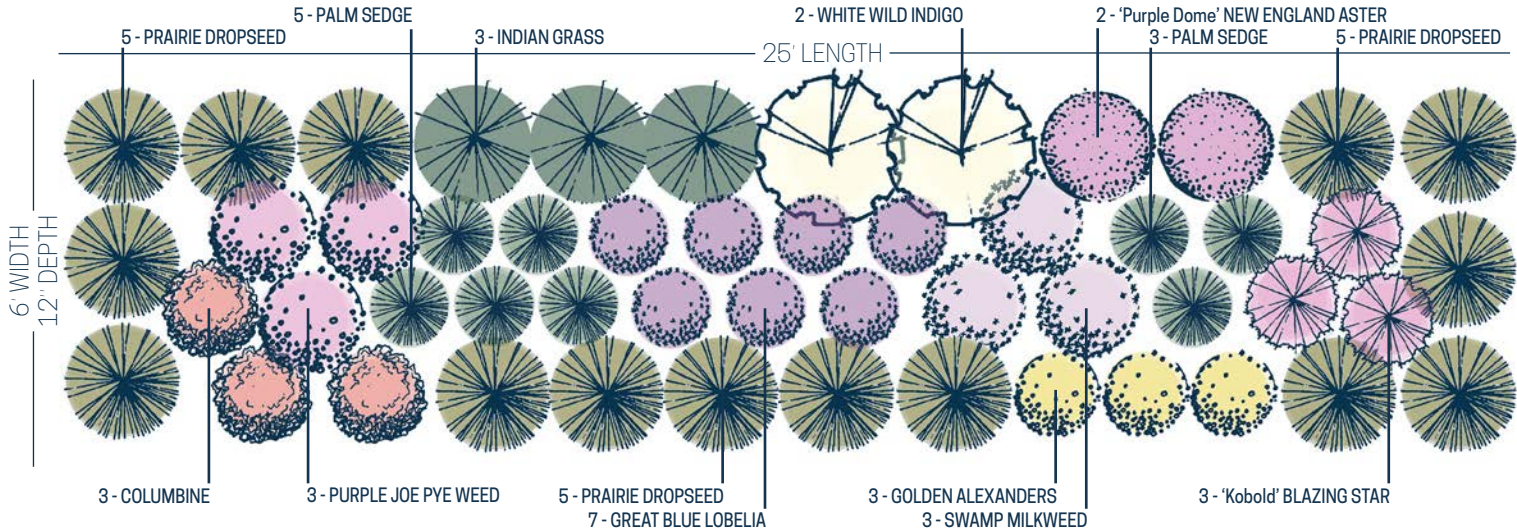
A NATIVE PLANTING GUIDE FOR SUNNY RAIN GARDEN BEDS

PLANTING PLAN FOR A 6' x 25' BED

Category Common Name (Total quantity in design)

BANK: Prairie Dropseed (15), Indian Grass (3), White Wild Indigo (2), ‘Purple Dome’ New England Aster (2), Golden Alexanders (3)
SLOPE: Columbine (3), Purple Joe Pye Weed (3), ‘Kobold’ Blazing Star (3)
BASIN: Palm Sedge (8), Great Blue Lobelia (7), Swamp Milkweed (3)

In addition, see the Red Oak Rain Garden Brochure for information related to Groundcover, Seasonal, and Structural categories.



FORBS ORGANIZED BY BLOOM TIME

SPRING

SUMMER

FALL

WINTER

COLUMBINE <i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>				
GOLDEN ALEXANDERS <i>Zizia aurea</i>				
WHITE WILD INDIGO <i>Baptisia alba</i>				
SWAMP MILKWEED <i>Asclepias incarnata</i>				
PURPLE JOE PYE WEED <i>Eutrochium purpureus</i>				
‘Kobold’ BLAZING STAR <i>Liatris pycnostachya</i> ‘Kobold’				
GREAT BLUE LOBELIA <i>Lobelia siphilitica</i>				
‘Purple Dome’ NEW ENGLAND ASTER <i>Aster novae-angliae</i> ‘Purple Dome’				

OTHERS ORGANIZED BY HEIGHT

PALM SEDGE <i>Carex muskigemensis</i>				
PRAIRIE DROPSEED <i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i>				
INDIAN GRASS <i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>				

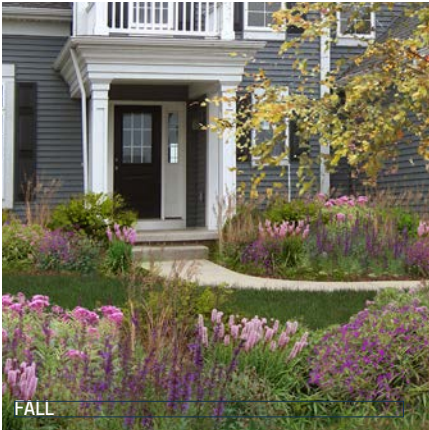
FOUR SEASON INTEREST








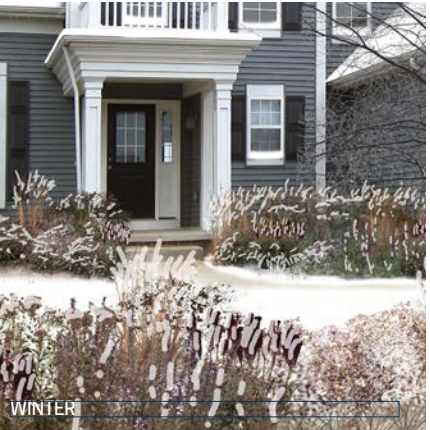
- **COLUMBINE**
Aquilegia canadensis
- **WHITE WILD INDIGO**
Baptisia alba
- **GOLDEN ALEXANDERS**
Zizia aurea
















































































- **GREAT BLUE LOBELIA**
Lobelia siphilitica
- **PURPLE JOE PYE WEED**
Eutrochium purpureus
- **SWAMP MILKWEED**
Asclepias incarnata
- **GOLDEN ALEXANDERS**
Zizia aurea
- **WHITE INDIGO**
Baptisia alba
- **‘Kobold’ BLAZING STAR**
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- **INDIAN GRASS**
Sorghastrum nutans



- **‘Purple Dome’ NEW ENGLAND ASTER**
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Carex muskigemensis



- **PRAIRIE DROPSEED**
Sporobolus heterolepis
- **INDIAN GRASS**
Sorghastrum nutans
- **WHITE INDIGO**
Baptisia alba

SUNLIGHT	HEIGHT	SPACING	MOISTURE			SOIL TYPE	COMMON ECOSYSTEM	SUPPORTS			DROUGHT TOLERANCE
		1'-3'	1'-1½'			SANDY, ROCKY	SAVANNAH				
		1'-2½'	1'-2'			LOAM	WET PRAIRIE				
		3'-6'	2½'-4'			TOLERANT	BLACK SOIL PRAIRIE				
		3'-5'	1½'-3'			LOAM, CLAY, SILT	FLOODPLAIN				
		3'-7'	3'-4'			SILT/SANDY LOAM	WET PRAIRIE				
		2'-4'	1'-2'			LOAM, CLAY	BLACK SOIL PRAIRIE				
		1'-4'	1'-1½'			LOAM	WET PRAIRIE				
		2'-4'	2'-3'			LOAM/CLAY	BLACK SOIL PRAIRIE				
		2'-3'	1'-2'			SANDY/SILT	MOIST WOODLAND				
		2'-3'	2'-3'			LOAM, ROCKY	HILL PRAIRIE				
		3'-7'	2'-3'			TOLERANT	SAVANNAH				

Some of these species freely self-seed if seed heads are left standing post-bloom. If this is an issue, remove spent flowers and seed heads. Some plants may migrate from one location to another over time. If this is not desired, transplant them back to preferred locations.

SOURCES
ILLINOIS WILDFLOWERS - illinoiswildflowers.info
PRAIRIE MOON NURSERY - prairiemoon.com
GARDENER EXPERIENCE

LEGEND
☀ SUN
☾ PART SUN

■ BASIN
■ SLOPE
■ BANK
🐝 ATTRACTS BEES
🐦 ATTRACTS HUMMINGBIRDS
🐦 ATTRACTS BIRDS

🦋 ATTRACTS A VARIETY OF BUTTERFLIES
🦋 ATTRACTS MONARCH BUTTERFLIES
🦋 CATERPILLAR HOST

✅ TOLERATES DROUGHT
✅ TOLERATES DROUGHT, BUT MAY YELLOW AND DROOP
❌ WILL NOT SURVIVE EXTENDED DROUGHT