

Water Quality

In cities and commercial areas, as much as two-thirds of rainwater runs off pavement and roofs instead of being absorbed into the ground where it nourishes plants. And when this water runs off, eventually entering waterways, it takes with it all the oils, salts, fertilizers, pesticides, pet waste, transportation chemicals, and sediment it has picked up along the way as it travels from your roof, driveway, and sidewalk; across parking lots; and down streets. A rain garden can help water enter back into the soil where it can be filtered by plants and their root structures before entering the groundwater or our creeks and lakes as clean, fresh water.

Airport Heights Elementary School, Girdwood K-8 School, and Winterberry Charter School are all constructing rain gardens this year. Visit Mears Middle School to see an example of a rain garden.

Community grants are available for low-impact development (LID) practices. Download a grant application at AnchorageRainGardens.com. Grants are made possible by funding from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Municipality of Anchorage, and your willingness to try something new!

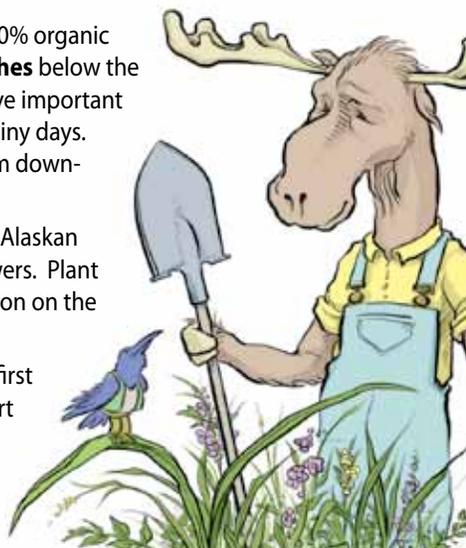
Low-impact development (LID) techniques include rain gardens, rain barrels, green roofs, geoblock grass paving, infiltration vaults, permeable pavers, pervious concrete, and any other LID application a person can make a valid argument for. All LID techniques qualify for reimbursement of 50% of the cost up to \$750 residential, \$5,000 commercial, and higher if a demonstration or pilot project.

For more information, contact the Municipality of Anchorage Rain Garden Program Coordinator at (907) 343-8084 or AnchorageRainGardens@muni.org.

How to Build a Rain Garden

- **Identify sources of runoff** around your home or business.
- **Size and site** your rain garden for the amount of runoff it will capture. Choose a location where runoff will easily flow via gutter, pipe, swale, or by sheet flow across a lawn. A municipal rain garden specialist can give you free one-on-one guidance about your rain garden. As soon as the snow melts, schedule your initial site visit by calling the **Rain Garden Hotline: 343-8084**. We will come to you!
- **Gather supplies**, including work gloves, a shovel, soil, bags of sand, native plants, and possibly a rain gutter extension. You can transplant native plants from your yard or your neighbor's yard.
- **Dig, dig, dig**, and dig some more. You will need to excavate your rain garden area down to **3 feet** below the point where runoff enters. Take advantage of natural low spots in your yard if possible.
- **Fill the hole** with a mixture of 60% sand, 40% organic topsoil. Stop filling when you get to **10 inches** below the point where runoff enters. This is to preserve important surface volume storage capacity for very rainy days. Use any extra excavated soil to build a berm down-slope from your rain garden.
- **Plant** the area with hardy native perennial Alaskan plants, shrubs, bunch grasses, and wildflowers. Plant drought-tolerant, erosion-fighting vegetation on the berm for stabilization.
- **Mulch, water, and weed** regularly for the first two summers. Once established, your smart rain garden location and plant choices will practically take care of themselves.

Visit www.AnchorageRainGardens.com



WATER QUALITY EVENTS

Rain Garden Workshop – April 21

10am -- Alaska Mill Feed & Garden Center (1501 E. 1st Ave.) is hosting a free spring rain garden workshop to help people plan their summer gardening before it gets too busy. The class will be held in their classroom near the store. Sign up in the store or by calling 276-6016.

Scoop the Poop for Earth Day – April 21

Anchorage Scoop the Poop is hosting the annual Earth Day clean up at University Lake and Connor's Bog off-leash dog parks. Fecal Coliform bacteria is the number one pollutant in Anchorage's streams. Please come walk your dog and lend a hand to help keep our water clean. Free Scoop button and dog scarves available. All clean-up equipment provided. Call 529-9289 or visit www.anchoragecreeks.org.

National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day – April 28

Drop off unused or expired prescription or over-the-counter medications for free between 10 am and 2 pm. The Alaska Safe Medicine Alliance, in partnership with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, is hosting safe drug disposal sites in Anchorage and throughout Alaska. Call 800-882-9539 or visit www.dea.gov for details and locations.

Creek Cleanup – May 19

Help clean up creeks and streams around the Anchorage area. Call 907-27-CREEK or email matt@anchoragecreeks.org if you would like to volunteer, sponsor, or if you see large collections of trash and debris in or near a creek or wetland. Visit www.anchoragecreeks.org for details.