

Safe Storm Water: Summer Gardening Projects

Exposed soil in your backyard can erode - wash away in the rain -and end up in the storm water system. Along the way it carries pesticides, pollutants and debris that end up polluting the water supply and eventually ends up as sediment in oceans and water bodies.

Cover Exposed Soil

The best way to prevent soil erosion is to keep soil covered. Mulch, stones and gravel are some coverings that protect exposed soil from runoff, but planting native plants is an attractive and inexpensive solution.

Plants and grasses hold soil in place so that it can't wash away. Plants native to the area are the best planting option – they thrive in your yard conditions, and you don't have to worry about introducing non-native invasive plants that could be harmful to the natural habitat.

To quickly and easily add native plants to a bare space, use a seed bomb. Seed bombs are made of local or store bought clay, seeds native to the area, and compost. Mix the ingredients with water, form them into balls and let them dry in the sun. Once dry, just throw them into the bare area for a quick groundcover.

The [Instructables](#) website provides step by step instructions for making seed bombs. For information about invasive plants and native plant guides, see:

[The National Invasive Species Council](#)

[Pennsylvania Native Plant Society](#)

[Landscaping with Native Plants from the PA DCNR](#)

Create a Rain Garden

A rain garden is another summer gardening project that prevents storm water runoff. A rain garden is a depressed garden area in a location where runoff collects. It's filled with native, water tolerant plants that help to hold water so that it doesn't wash away. The [Rain Garden Network](#) gives detailed information about creating a rain garden.

Rain barrels

Rain barrels are another way to collect rain water and prevent runoff. As a bonus, they save water and reduce water expenses. Water collected in a rain barrel can be used to water lawns and gardens, wash vehicles and other outdoor water uses.

The [Montgomery County Conservation District](#) and [Rain Barrel Guide](#) provide information on acquiring rain barrels or making on yourself. And old barrels can be converted to rain barrels, as long as they were not used to hold hazardous or toxic materials.

These fun summer gardening projects not only prevent hazardous runoff, they make your yard more attractive and earth friendly.