



Duke Farms
Living Habitats

Keep Your Rainwater On-Site

Why?

Rainwater that is allowed to fall on rooftops, driveways and other impervious surfaces often picks up pollution along its path to gutters, storm drains and, eventually, waterways. When kept on site, rainwater gathers fewer pollutants, keeps pollutants out of natural waterways and can be used instead of municipal and well water for watering gardens and house plants!

Considerations before you begin:

1. Does your town have any restrictions regarding capturing rain water on-site?
2. Have you analyzed the storm water runoff from your property?

6 ways to keep your rainwater onsite:

1. **Hang a Rain Chain.** Rather than funneling rainwater down a gutter downspout and out to a storm drain, a rain chain takes water from your roof and directs it into your landscape or rain barrel.
2. **Install a Rain Barrel.** A rain barrel is a system that collects and stores rainwater from your roof that would otherwise be lost to runoff and diverted to storm drains and streams.
3. **Add a Cistern.** Cisterns are like rain barrels but are larger and come in different shapes depending on location.
4. **Plant a Rain Garden.** A rain garden is a garden of native plants planted in a shallow depression in order to reduce runoff and recharge groundwater. The plants in the garden remove most pollution from the water while looking beautiful! Ideal locations for rain gardens include between impervious surfaces, places where water already puddles, and places near downspouts.
5. **Plant a Diverse Landscape.** A landscape comprised of layers including canopy trees, understory trees, shrubs and herbaceous perennials slows down water and lets it return to the groundwater system instead of running into storm drains. Turf areas are often compacted because of constant mowing and do not do an effective job of holding rainwater on site.
6. **Loosen Compacted soils, Add compost.** Soil compacted from years of mowing or foot-traffic will not absorb water. The best thing you can do for that soil is loosen compacted soil by digging or tilling and work in organic matter to improve drainage. Replant with a landscape of diverse native plants to ensure rainwater is captured onsite.

Resources:

[Rain Garden Manual of New Jersey](#) – Native Plant Society of New Jersey

[Rain Chains](#) – University of Arizona Cooperative Extension

[Rain Barrels](#) - Rutgers

[Backyard Cisterns](#) – NJ Green Building Manual

[Plant a Diverse Landscape](#) – US Forest Service

[Loosen Compacted Soils, Add Compost](#) – Cornell University Cooperative Extension