

Yard and Garden – 09-03-2011- Ted Griess / Extension Horticulture Assistant

*Shout down my rain barrel
Slide down my cellar door
And we'll be jolly friends
Forevermore.*

When I was a child, I remember my mother singing that song to me. It was titled *Come Out And Play With Me*.

For you gardeners with little, if any, gray hair around your temples, perhaps a rain barrel sounds like a new gardening concept. The fact is years ago many households had rain barrels. I remember them well. Rain barrels are actually old school, but today the concept is carried further. Today, it is all about rain gardens. Like the rain barrel, rain gardens are designed to conserve rainwater runoff, but on a larger scale and with greater benefits.

A one-inch rain falling on an acre of land equals about 27,000 gallons of water. For you fellow urbanites, the size of an acre of land is about equivalent to that of a football field. The average community covers many football fields. Where do you suppose most of that runoff water goes? If you guessed down the city's storm drains and out into our natural waterways, you are correct. Sadly, before this runoff reaches the waterways, it flows over assorted surfaces picking up a variety of pollutants including fertilizers, pesticides, grease, oils and other contaminants on its way. Having a rain garden in your landscape not only makes good sense, but it also makes you a steward of water quality protecting our lakes and streams.



A rain garden is a shallow landscape depression designed temporarily to capture the rainwater that runs off our rooftops, sidewalks and driveways. There, for twelve to forty-eight hours, the water slowly infiltrates the soil capturing pollutants, improving water quality and recharging groundwater. In addition, when

properly constructed, a rain garden adds beauty to the landscape. Just a few other advantages of a rain garden include the following:

- Providing wildlife habitat
- Decreasing erosion in streams and lakes
- Reducing flooding and water damage
- Reducing the cost of dealing with storm water

I am excited and pleased to announce that the City of Kearney, University of Nebraska – Lincoln Stormwater Management Team, The National Institute of Food and Agriculture and The U.S Department of Agriculture will be sponsoring a **free** -of -charge workshop to anyone interested. Located at Harmon Park, 3100 Fifth Avenue, Kearney, Nebraska, on Thursday, September 15, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., attendees will learn how to properly design and build a rain garden. Each person will receive a rain garden construction manual and additional material.

Presenters of this workshop will be landscape architect Steve Rodie from UNL Extension; Katie Pekarek, biological systems engineer also with UNL Extension; and UNL graduate assistant, Andy Szatko. These trainers will teach step-by-step how to create the perfect rain garden. The exciting part of this workshop is that you will gain a hands-on experience by participating in the installation of a rain garden in Harmon Park. Prepare to get your hands dirty! By the way, did I mention, the workshop is free!

All it takes for you to get involved in this wonderful project is to pre-register. Log onto <http://www.nebraskah2o.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/20110915-Kearney-RG-workshop-flyer1.pdf> for a workshop flyer/ registration form. You may also call the city of Kearney at 308-233-3273 or stop by the Extension office and pick up a registration form. Forms need to be completed and returned to Andy Harter with the City of Kearney at 1919 Fifteenth Avenue, Kearney, no later than September 13. Lunch is included.

I have a hunch after attending this workshop, you will be singing a newer version to my old song and it may go like this.

*Come see my rain garden
Protect our lakeside shore
And we'll be jolly friends
Forevermore.*