

RainReady Oak Park

Frequently Asked Questions



WHAT IS RAINREADY OAK PARK?

RainReady Oak Park is a grant program that helps homeowners use smart landscaping to manage rain at their property. The program is funded by the Village of Oak Park and administered by the non-profit Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT).

WHY IS THE VILLAGE OFFERING THIS PROGRAM?

The goals of RainReady Oak Park are to:

- Reduce the burden on the local sewer by capturing rain where it falls
- Reduce drainage problems at homes
- Provide health and environmental benefits through smart landscaping

WHAT ASSISTANCE WILL I RECEIVE?

You will benefit from:

- A professional home assessment to identify improvements to manage rain at your home
- A landscape design and recommended construction scope of work
- A grant for 50 percent of the total cost of eligible landscaping improvements, up to a maximum grant of \$1,300

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible for the program, you need to:

- Be a resident of the Village of Oak Park
- Own and live in a single-family home
- Be willing to disconnect downspouts from the Village storm sewer
- Have no outstanding Village obligations or building code violations
- Be willing to maintain the landscaping improvements for three years
- Be willing to participate in short, confidential evaluation surveys used to improve the program

WHAT KIND OF LANDSCAPING IMPROVEMENTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR A PROGRAM GRANT?

- **Rain Garden or Bioswale**
Let rain soak into a rain garden or bioswale that uses porous soil and water-loving plants. Rain gardens are bowl-shaped; bioswales are line-shaped. *Typical cost: \$3,000 - \$4,000*
- **Cistern or Dry Well**
Store rain in a cistern or dry well. Dry wells are below ground; cisterns are above ground. *Typical cost: \$1,000*
- **Permeable Paving**
Replace old concrete or asphalt with open grass pavers, interlocking permeable pavers, or permeable concrete that lets rain pass through. *Typical cost: Varies by pavement type*

WHAT KIND OF LANDSCAPING IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR A GRANT?

French drains, tree removal, general regrading without infiltration, and new impermeable surfaces (e.g., concrete parking pad) are **not** eligible.

WHAT COSTS CAN BE REIMBURSED?

Eligible costs to install the approved landscaping scope of work include:

- Design and Engineering Services
- Materials and Equipment Rental
- Labor and Construction

Ineligible costs include:

- Watering and maintenance of landscaping
- Private construction inspection services hired by the homeowner
- Costs associated with utility staking
- Any landscaping or other work not within the approved scope of work

The homeowner will be responsible for paying the contractor in full before receiving a program grant. Project costs above the grant amount will be paid by the homeowner.

HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

1. Submit a program application by **April 1st**. There are a limited number of grants available. If you don't receive a grant this year, you will be placed on a waiting list for future assistance.
2. CNT may contact you to obtain a signed grant agreement and additional information about your home. If selected for the program, you will pay a \$200 refundable deposit to the Village, towards the cost of the home assessment. The deposit is refunded when eligible landscaping is installed. If no eligible landscaping is installed, the Village will retain the deposit.
3. Schedule a time for RainReady to visit your home, create a landscaping plan, and identify other recommendations. If you already have a landscaping plan, you can submit the plan for review and approval.
4. Review your report and plan with CNT.
5. Identify and contract a landscaper of your choice by **June 15th**. Some projects may require a construction permit issued by the Village.
6. Complete the landscaping work by **October 31st**. Submit the Grant Reimbursement Forms to the Village by **November 15th**.
7. If a permit is required, a Village inspector will inspect the finished work. You will receive your grant and deposit refund within 30 to 45 days after successfully passing the inspection, if needed.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I RECEIVE MY GRANT?

Your participation in our program evaluation is critical to improving the program. RainReady will email you short, confidential surveys. With your permission, we may also document your landscaping with professional photography.

I'D LIKE TO APPLY. WHAT DO I DO?

Fill out an application and download the program documents at cnt.org/projects/rainready-oak-park. The application deadline is **April 1st**. You can also pick up a paper application at Village Hall. CNT will review the applications and notify selected applicants. Eligible applicants who aren't selected will be placed on a waiting list.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will smart landscaping stop my flooding?

Smart landscaping will help with yard ponding. Addressing severe yard ponding may require work that exceeds the maximum grant provided by RainReady. Smart landscaping may also help lessen seepage by fixing the grading around your home, but building foundation repairs or other work may be necessary too. If you have sewage backup, please apply instead for a Village Sewer Backup Protection Grant [[link](#)].

Do I have the right kind of yard?

Smart landscaping will be most effective if it is connected to at least one downspout and receives rain from at least one-fourth of your roof. Rain gardens, bioswales, dry wells, and permeable pavement should be located at least ten feet away from any building foundation. Permeable pavement should only be installed in an area where you currently have regular concrete or asphalt. Above-ground cisterns (like oversized rain barrels) can be located right next to your home. Cisterns should be emptied between storms, and discharged on your property, at least ten feet away from any building foundation.

How big should my new landscaping be?

This depends on the size and shape of your roof and yard, your soil, and how much rain you want to capture. All smart landscaping provides some benefits. The average RainReady home rain garden is 300 to 400 square feet.

What if I have connected downspouts?

If you have downspouts or a sump pump connected to the sewer, but you are willing to disconnect from the sewer so that they discharge into your yard, please include that information in your application. If you believe your downspouts or sump pump needs to remain connected, you can request a downspout disconnection waiver.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

Please email CNT's RainReady team at **RainReadyHome@cnt.org**