



# MAINTAINING YOUR RAIN GARDEN

University of Illinois Extension - Master Gardeners  
Center For Neighborhood Technology - RainReady



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
EXTENSION



# OVERVIEW

- Check inflow and outflow regularly and clear away any debris
- Check from time to time to make sure it is draining properly
- Make sure a hard surface or crust hasn't formed
- Maintain 2 to 4 inches of mulch
- Do not use inorganic fertilizers
- Remove weeds, don't use pesticides to control them

# BASIC MAINTENANCE

- Water after planting and during dry spells whenever the top 4 inches is dry—especially during the first two years after establishing your rain garden
- Maintain a 2 to 4 inch layer of organic mulch (ideally shredded hardwood)
- Keep weeded, especially in the first two years
- Remove dead plants and dead or unsightly growth; replace with healthy plants unless the dead plant had a fungus or other disease
- Don't remove plants when dormant (early Spring)

# SEASONAL MAINTENANCE

- **Early Fall (September-October)**
  - Check for erosion and excessive flooding during storms
  - Weed, and water during periods of drought or if soil is dry below 4 inches
  - Replant if necessary
  - Check pH and adjust if necessary (keep pH between 8 and 5)

# SEASONAL MAINTENANCE

- **Early Winter (November-December)**
  - Replace mulch as needed
  - If excess fine sediment has accumulated, remove gently with a shovel without disturbing plants
- **Late Winter (January - February)**
  - Remove trash and debris
  - Don't pile snow onto rain garden - but don't remove snow that has fallen there;
  - Don't use chemical ice melts near the inflow of the rain garden

# SEASONAL MAINTENANCE

- **Spring (March-April-May)**

- Remove dead plant parts; replace mulch if needed; thin or trim overcrowded plants
- Check for erosion and excessive flooding during storms
- Weed, water if dry, and replant if needed
- Clear any gutters connected to the rain garden

- **Summer (June-July-August)**

- Check for erosion and excessive flooding during storms
- Weed weekly, water during periods of drought or if soil is dry below 4 inches

# CORRECTING PROBLEMS

- If water stands for more than 24 hours, the rain garden is not draining properly. This can be corrected by a contractor.
- If you see gullying or other signs of erosion during and after rain, adding more stones to the inflow area, or more mulch, can slow down the inflow of water.

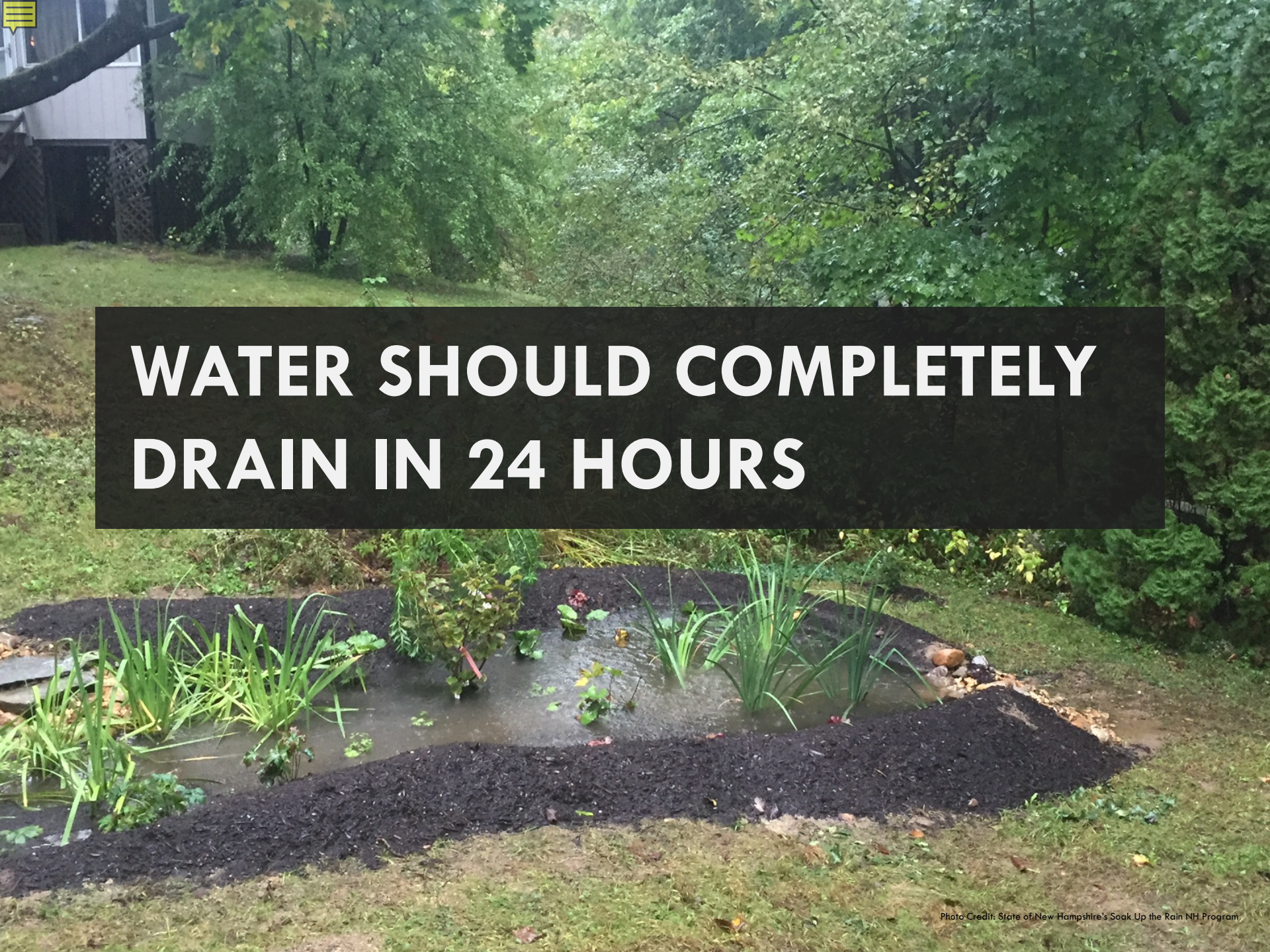




# IDENTIFY AND CORRECT EROSION







**WATER SHOULD COMPLETELY  
DRAIN IN 24 HOURS**





# WHAT'S A WEED

- In Illinois, remove
  - White clover
  - Purslane
  - Canadian thistle
  - Dandelion
  - Pigweed
  - Lambsquarters
- Chickweed
- Wild carrot/Queen Anne's Lace
- Wild violet
- Annual bluegrass
- Crabgrass
- Nutsedge
- Ground ivy/Creeping Charlie



# WHITE CLOVER



A close-up photograph of a purslane plant growing on a surface of dark, irregular gravel. The plant has a dense, low-growing habit with numerous small, green, fleshy leaves and small yellow flowers. The stems are a reddish-brown color. A dark, semi-transparent horizontal bar is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the word "PURSLANE" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

# PURSLANE





# CANADIAN THISTLE







# DANDELION





# PIGWEEED



A close-up photograph of a Lambsquarters plant (Chenopodium album) showing its characteristic green, fuzzy, and branched inflorescence. The plant is set against a blurred green background. A dark grey horizontal bar is superimposed over the middle of the image, containing the title text.

# LAMBSQUARTERS

Photo Credit: Smith, R.W., Wildflower Center Digital Library



A close-up photograph of a chickweed plant, showing its green, rounded leaves and numerous small, white, five-petaled flowers. The plant is densely packed, and the background is a soft-focus green.

# CHICKWEED





# **WILD CARROT / QUEEN ANNE'S LACE**





# WILD VIOLET



A close-up photograph of an Annual Bluegrass plant growing through a layer of brown wood mulch. The plant has a dense, rounded clump of bright green, blade-like leaves. Several thin, upright stems rise from the clump, bearing small, green seed heads. The mulch consists of irregular pieces of wood chips and bark. A dark, semi-transparent horizontal band is superimposed over the middle of the image, containing the title text in white.

# ANNUAL BLUEGRASS



A photograph of a crabgrass plant growing in dry, cracked soil. The plant has several green, lance-shaped leaves and a single seed head. A black rectangular box is overlaid on the image, containing the word "CRABGRASS" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

# CRABGRASS



The image shows a close-up of nutsedge plants. They have long, narrow, green leaves and several upright stems topped with clusters of small, yellow, star-shaped flowers. The plants are growing in a grassy area. A dark horizontal bar is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the word "NUTSEGE" in white capital letters.

# NUTSEGE



A close-up photograph of a Ground Ivy (Creeping Charlie) plant. The plant features dense, low-growing green foliage with small, rounded, lobed leaves. Interspersed among the leaves are numerous small, light purple flowers with darker purple spots on their petals. The overall appearance is a lush, carpet-like ground cover.

# **GROUND IVY / CREEPING CHARLIE**



# RESOURCES

- <https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Pages/PlantListRainGarden.aspx>
- [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE DOCUMENTS/nrcs142p2\\_011366.pdf](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/nrcs142p2_011366.pdf)
- <http://www.irwp.org/conservation-and-restoration/green-infrastructure-and-lid/rain-gardens-3/rain-garden-how-to-2/>
- <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/hkmw/downloads/68238.pdf>