

APRIL 29, 2021

LOWCOUNTRY *Living* HOME, LAWN & GARDEN

Manage water into your landscape by building rain gardens

By VICKI BROWN
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Rain can be a blessing, but it can also create problems for yards. Whether there is standing water, flooding, or dry patches, learning to manage rain water can fix those landscape issues.

Too much rain on the home landscape can lead to erosion and flooding issues. Plants that receive too much water end up with root rot, and standing water breeds mosquitoes. Erosion causes land loss for landowners, and run off into ponds can create algae issues. Knowing what to do and how to manage rain water can be a cost effective and preventative benefit.

Kim Morganello works as a Water Resources associate with Clemson Extension. She has some tips on how Colleton residents can better manage rain water in yards.

First, she said, you need to go outside when it is raining to see what is happening in your yard. Watch where the water goes when it runs off your roof.

Next, dig a hole, let it fill with water and watch how long it takes to drain. If it takes 24 hours or more, you have slow draining soil. This will require a little work to fix your rain water issues.

Building a Rain Garden

If you have gutters with a downspout, see where the water goes. Water that pools, or sits, needs to be diverted. In this case, it could be in your best interest to create a rain garden.

To do this, dig a trench from the downspout to a nearby area that can be used for landscaping. You can also insert piping.

Using a can of spray paint, outline a shape for the rain garden...it's usually kidney shaped. It can be several yards long or bigger. Dig down 12 inches, piling the dirt around the rim of the garden and pack down. It will look like a shallow swimming pool with a small ten-inch wall around it. Put down landscaping net and add compost for healthy plants. Add soil or sand, then cedar mulch. Cedar floats less. Use native South Carolina plants in the garden.

Native plants such as shrubs, perennials and grasses have roots that are much deeper than turf and they use water better. Top with cedar mulch. As it rains, water pours through the downspout, into the trench and then into the rain garden.

Use Native Plants

According to the South Carolina Wildlife Federation and Clemson Extension, native plants or those adaptable to the area for rain gardens are the Aster, Wild Indigo, Beebalm, Spicebush, Bluestar, Black Eyed Susan, Butterflyweed, Cardinal Flower, Common Milkweed, Common Yarrow, Coreopsis, Carolina Phlox, Downy Phlox, Goldenrod, Joe Pye Weed, Prairie Blazing Star, Beardtongue, Mountain Mint, Seashore Mallow, False Indigo, Golden canna, Coneflower, Swamp Sunflower, Beach Sunflower, Tall Ironweed, White Wild Indigo, Wild Cranesbill, Wild Geranium, Rozanne Cranesbill Geranium, Columbine, Coral Bells, Alumroot, and Milkweed. Some ferns for shady areas in the Lowcountry are the Christmas Fern, Cinnamon Fern, Marginal Shield Fern, New York Fern, Notted Chain Fern, Northern Maidenhair Fern, Royal Fern, Sensitive Fern, Southern Lady Fern. Some native grasses are the Bushy Bluestem, Inland Sea Oats, Indian Grass, Salt Cordgrass, Splitbeard Bluestem, Switchgrass, and Bulrush.

To select the right plant for the right place, visit the Clemson Extension Carolina Yards resource page found at www.clemson.edu/cy.

Standing water

If you have standing water, plant trees. Trees can absorb hundreds of gallons of water. A live oak absorbs 30 percent of rainfall and is the best source for containing standing water. A group of trees can absorb 60 percent of rainfall.

Another idea for standing water is to dig a small pool. Add a liner. Then, place a floating plant island or basket inside, with the vessel containing plants that thrive in water. Add matrix material.

The basket or island floats in the pool and the plant's roots go through the matrix and hang down in the water. The matrix removes bacteria from the water and help the plants thrive. Very little care is needed. You can even add koi fish.

Concrete vs Pavers

Some houses have sidewalks or patios made of concrete. Water has nowhere to go and comes in the house or runs into unwanted places. One way to fix this situation is with pavers. Take out the concrete and insert pavers with a layer of sand and gravel underneath. Lay pavers with pea gravel between each block. Water runs in between pavers, not on top. This will absorb rain more quickly.

Rain barrel

A rainwater harvesting system is the best answer for homeowners. One inch of rain can produce 600 gallons of rainwater from an average roof. So, a 60-gallon rain barrel is a good size. The water can be used to irrigate landscaping, wash pets, clean equipment, and a host of other things. It cannot be used for drinking. The barrel must be dark in color and contain a lid to prevent mosquito breeding and algae. No sunlight should be able to get into the barrel.

While these ideas seem to take a lot of work, they are worth the investment in the end. Rethinking your landscaping can save the environment, and your home and property while saving you money.



PHOTO courtesy of pondmarket.com
FLOATING PLANTS. A floating plant basket that contains plants and matrix material can be set in a small man-made pool with a liner. The roots hang down in the water to prevent algae.



PHOTO Courtesy of Clemson Extension
RAIN GARDENS. Digging a rain garden near downspouts or where water tends to stand still on your property is worth the time and effort as it saves your yard from erosion, from causing damage to your home, and from potential mosquito infestation.

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USED TEA BAGS HELP YOUR GARDEN GROW. Placing used tea bags or used, compostable coffee bags into the soil can help enhance your soil and reduce pests.

*Stop Throwing Out Your Used Tea Bags
They're surprising useful. Here are 12 things they can do post-brew.*

It feels so good to be able to do something with the things we'd normally discard. Coffee grounds as rose fertilizer and clementine peels saved for DIY candles come to mind, not to mention composting in general. If you're a regular or occasional tea drinker, you can add your tea bags to the list of garbage you shouldn't throw out just yet. Here are some ways to re-use them post brew:

- Add a hint of flavor to rice or grains. Hang your used tea bags in boiling water to infuse your food with a touch of flavor. Think jasmine tea with rice or chai tea with oatmeal.
- Protect house plants from fungal disease by re-brewing a used tea bag and using the weak tea (cooled) to water your plants.
- Neutralize odors naturally. Spread dried tea leaves in stinky spots like the cat litter box or in the bottom of your garbage bags.
- Make cleaning the fireplace safer and easier. Dump the damp contents of tea bags onto the ash to weigh it down before sweeping out the fireplace.
- De-grease pots and pans. Soak hard-to-clean dishes in water with a used tea bag tossed in. The tea will help loosen stuck-on food and break up grease.

- Add them to your bath. The antioxidants in tea are good for your skin and the gentle scent will add some aromatherapy to your soak.
- Take the sting out of insect bites and sunburns. Using a cool compress will reduce pain and inflammation of the affected areas.
- Make a hair rinse. Remove product buildup without using another product. Soak 3-4 used tea bags in warm water and pour it over your head after shampooing and conditioning as usual. Don't rinse. Pro tip: Chamomile brightens blondes and black tea adds a coppery shimmer to brunettes, according to Housewife How-Tos.
- Deodorize carpets by scattering the dried contents of several teabags over your rugs before you vacuum.
- Depuff tired eyes. Place cool tea bags over your eyes, cucumber style. According to Chasing Green, the tannins in the tea leaves may reduce bags and dark circles.
- Clean leather shoes by buffing with a damp teabag.
- Wash stinky hands, using a tea bag as you would a bar of soap to help eradicate garlic, onion, or fish odors.



Photo by Vicki Brown

REPURPOSING DAMAGED LAND. When a tornado destroys your tree line, what do you do? You repurpose it. Colleton resident Ryan Deichert and his son, Caden, remove broken trees so they can create a new ATV course.

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Easy your back and raise your bed

Submitted by StatePoint

Fairly easy to construct and even easier to maintain, raised garden beds are a great way to raise plants and vegetables in the comfort and convenience of your backyard.

Organic gardener Joe Lamp'l of "Growing a Greener World" knows about the ins and outs of raised garden beds.

Here are some of the top insights and tips by Lamp'l:

- Why use raised garden beds? A raised garden bed can help facilitate the ideal growing environment, as most people don't have that perfect soil naturally in their yard. Their accessibility makes them easier to work in and maintain. Plus, they're a nice architectural design element in any landscape.

- What's the ideal size? The main rule of the thumb applies to width. The bed should be no wider than 4 feet, as you never want to compact the soil when working. Length however, is based on personal preference and needs. As far as height is concerned, you want the roots to be able to grow out and down as much as possible -- 6-inches at minimum.

While 12-inches is common, anything higher is a bonus.

- What materials work best? Treated lumber is the most readily available and economical material and will likely last the longest, however, being an organic gardener Lamp'l prefers untreated hardwood, as it lasts almost as long and doesn't contain chemicals. Other materials you have around the home and yard, such as rocks, old tubs, etc., can work too.

- Where's the best location? Build your raised garden bed on level ground, in full sun exposure near a water supply.

To build a 10-foot x 4-foot x 18-inch raised bed, you'll need:

- Nine 6-inch x 6-inch x 12-foot cedar timbers
- Tape measure, t-square and marking pencil
- A saw and extension cord
- One box of 10-inch heavy-duty exterior wood screws
- Ten 24-inch x 1/2-inch rebar stakes
- Twenty 10-inch galvanized timber spikes
- Sledgehammer
- Impact drill and long drill bit
- Level
- Hammer
- Shovels
- Hardware cloth, wire cutters and fence staples
- Work gloves, safety glasses and ear plugs
- Wheelbarrow (to transport soil)

DIY Instructions:

1. Begin by cutting six, 6 x 6 timbers, each measuring 10-foot 6-inches in length. And six, 6 x 6 timbers, each measuring 4-foot 6-inches in length. Drill rebar holes in each timber.
2. Once the first layer of bed has been placed, leveled and squared in your desired location, fasten the corners using 10-inch wood screws. Secure the entire layer to the ground with 10 pieces of rebar.
3. Place the second layer of timbers, staggering the corners and fastening them with wood screws. Secure



Photo Courtesy of Gardner's World

RAISING BEDS FOR BETTER BACKS. According to national gardening officials, building a raised flower bed or vegetable garden in your backyard can help ease back pain and the hassles of traditional gardening.

this layer to the first with ten 10-inch galvanized spikes.

4. Install galvanized cloth to prevent burrowing pests from eating earthworms and destroying plants.

5. Place the third layer of timbers (following above directions).

6. Fill with soil and plants.

For more tips and complete build instructions, check out "How to Build Raised Garden Beds" by visiting Exmark.com/backyard. Exmark's Backyard Life is part

of a unique multimedia destination with a focus on helping homeowners make the most of their backyard. There you can also access other series, including "Prime Cuts" and "Dream Yards."

For an amazing crop this season, take a cue from the professionals and build a raised garden bed for best results.



Photo Provided

THEY'RE BACK. According to local Clemson Extension officials, these ETC worms are back in Colleton County, and are being found along trees. Here, a nest of the worms is found in the branches of a wild Cherry Tree.

They're back: Eastern Tent Caterpillars are popping up in local trees

By HEATHER WALTERS

Spring has brought to us many things in nature that we enjoy: birds, budding flowers and warmer days. The season has also brought Colleton residents a sometimes-unwelcomed visitor: the Eastern Tent Caterpillar.

The Eastern Tent Caterpillar, or the *Malacosoma Americanum*, is a "native pest" of North America, according to Marion Barnes, senior county extension agent with Clemson University.

They can be found crawling among trees in Colleton County, with their large nests located inside native trees.

"Their populations fluctuate from year to year, with large outbreaks occurring every several years," he said. "They feed on many hardwood species. Its damage does not kill trees, but some twig and foliage loss may occur," he said.

"Some homeowners find their unsightly, silken-like tent structures in the forks of trees unattractive. Their large numbers can become a nuisance as they crawl over plants, sidewalks and structures. Oaks, wild cherry, wild plum, crab apple, and sweet gum as well as many hardwood trees are some of their favorite habitat," he said.

The Eastern Tent Caterpillar lays large egg masses during Winter. Some of these masses contain as many as 400 eggs. The larva then emerge in Spring.

"As they hatch, these social insects gather together to spin a nest in the forks of a tree. The caterpillars tend to feed on tree foliage during early morning and evenings, returning to the nest during the heat of the day, and during rainy weather for protection," said Barnes.

According to Barnes, the larva (caterpillars) are brightly colored with long hairs on their bodies, mostly along the sides.

At maturity, caterpillars can reach one and a half to two inches in length. "For about 4 to 6 weeks, the caterpillars feed, grow and expand their nests, then scatter, spin cocoons of woven whitish or yellow silk and pupate," he said. "Cocoons can be found under bark, in a rolled leaf or in dead plant material on the ground."

"After a few weeks, the adult emerges from the cocoon as a reddish-brown moth. They mate and the female lays eggs on small branches which will hatch next spring, starting the cycle all over again," he said.

How to remove a lot of larvae

Barnes says that caterpillar populations are "generally controlled by numerous natural enemies, such as predators, (birds, other insects), diseases (viral, fungal, bacterial) and a number of parasitic wasps." In a case where a Colleton homeowner finds their property with too many of these nests, the homeowner can physically remove the nests.

Tents can also be broken open to expose larva to predators.

It's always best to call Clemson Extension for advice and information.

"If treatment with an insecticide is warranted, remember larva larger than 1/4 inch in length and those beneath the webbing are difficult to control with a pesticide. When choosing a pesticide consider one that has a low impact on the environment. Be mindful of pollinators when applying pesticides," he said.

According to Barnes, products such as Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), are less toxic to insects and to flowering trees.

The Colleton County Clemson Extension Office can be contacted at 843-549-2596.

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Photo by Vicki Brown

A FIELD OF GREEN. Richard Cawley's collards stop traffic near his Walterboro house, as passers-by want to get a better look at the lush garden.



Photo by Vicki Brown

BIG AND HARDY. Walterboro resident Richard Cawley says his inner-city collards can grow up to 2-foot-tall and 4-feet-wide.



Photo by Vicki Brown

MAMMOTH COLLARDS. Richard Cawley's largest collard plant is more than 2-feet-tall. He grows his collards each year in the yard of his home, located in the City of Walterboro.

Cawley's collards

By VICKI BROWN
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Richard and Sherry Cawley have caused quite a traffic jam on a tiny street near USC Salkehatchie in Walterboro. Why is this happening? The Cawley's vegetables are growing.

"The police came by one day and said I needed to hire an off-duty officer to direct traffic here," laughed Richard Cawley. "It seems that people drive by, see the collards and tomatoes, and slow down to take it all in. They don't pay attention to the car in front of them and end up rear-ending the car in front."

Cawley is used to the stir his vegetables have caused. His small plot of land across the street from his home is the location of the huge collards and flourishing tomato vines. It's unusual to see the thriving vegetable garden sitting in the middle of town.

"A lot of elderly people enjoy driving by and looking at the garden," said Cawley. "They miss the old days, and this reminds them of what used to be," he said.

At 77 years old, it's growing harder and harder for Cawley to keep up a garden. He hires a man to assist him every so often, but says that he doesn't know how long he will have the help. "Good help is hard to find, and getting harder to find all the time," said Cawley.

Though his garden plot is larger than the typical home garden, it makes staggering planting a lot easier.

"I have a friend who loans me a small tractor that makes the rows for me. I only plant a few rows at a time, giving other rows a rest. I plant collards almost all

year round," he said.

In early March he has a lush row of collards full grown. For almost a month he will cut some. Then in late March in his empty "resting" rows, he sets up stakes and cordage.

Meanwhile, he has started tomato plants in a small greenhouse. As they sprout up, he takes them out, plants them, and stakes them up.

That's when the traffic jams start.

"We used to set up a vegetable stand on the corner of Jefferies Highway and Bells Highway, across from Parker's (Convenience Store) and sell all summer long," said Sherry Cawley. "But it's just too hot, even with a fan."

It's during those hot months that drought becomes a serious problem for many gardeners, but not for the Cawleys. They have an underground well with a spigot. Cawley has set up an irrigation system with a clever attachment that will let him add fertilizer to the irrigation hoses. The plants get fertilized and watered at the same time: this is why he says he has collards that are 2-foot-high and 4-feet-wide.

"I like growing things," said Cawley. He doesn't know how much longer he will be able to continue to plant, but he has no plans to stop any time soon. "I guess people will just have to be more careful when they drive by to see the garden. I'm not ready to make any changes," he said.

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Preparing for Purple Martins

By Marion Barnes
Senior County Extension Agent
Clemson University

The Purple Martin may be America's most wanted birds, homeowners and birding enthusiasts spend a lot of time and resources to attract this beautiful song bird, which is also the largest member of the swallow family. Purple martins have been under human management longer than any other species in North America. Prior to Europeans arriving in the New World, Native Americans were enticing these desirable birds to nest in their villages by hanging hollowed-out gourds for them to nest in.

Purple martins are secondary cavity nesters, using hollow trees and cavities made by woodpeckers. They are just one of the many species which have been negatively impacted due to the shortages of natural nesting sites and competition for nesting sites from introduced exotic species like the English house sparrow and starlings. Many homeowners have tried to reverse this trend by erecting wooden, plastic or aluminum multi-compartment bird condos or gourds for these birds. Finally, conservationists are seeing an increase in the numbers of Purple Martins in the U.S.

Purple Martins are neo-tropic in nature, meaning they migrate south each year. They nest here in the North American hemisphere and after nesting is complete, migrate to South America (Brazil, Argentina and surrounding areas) where they molt and grow a new set of feathers. Martins generally begin showing up in the southern portion of our state in mid to late February. Many folks don't consider it spring until the martins have arrived.

The older martins tend to return to their old nesting areas while young birds seek new ones. This usually means that once a house is used, it is likely it will continue to be used and new houses will eventually be occupied as first-year martins seek nesting places. Males generally arrive earlier and select the nest site. Contrary to the old country legend, early arriving "scouts" are not checking to see if the environment is

safe for returning birds, but are actually the older, experienced martins arriving to begin nesting. Younger birds will soon follow.

Martins are monogamous for the breeding season. They construct their nest from twigs, weeds, dead leaves, coarse grasses and other similar material. The female lays three to eight white eggs and incubates them for fifteen to eighteen days. Both parents feed and care for the young. Young martins will stay in the nest for three to four weeks before they leave and often return to the area for a few days before their final departure.

According to experts, martins will feed and drink only while in flight. These birds have a very diverse diet. They will consume grasshoppers, dragonflies, stink bugs, midges, Japanese beetles, moths, butterflies, wasps, flying ants and more. Martins are not heavy consumers of mosquitoes as legend has it. In a study conducted by the Purple Martin Conservation Association headquartered in Pennsylvania, researchers failed to find a single mosquito in their diet over the seven-year study period.

Martins will nest in a variety of houses. In the past it was common to see bottle gourds hanging from a tall pole with crossarms or old wagon wheel, but plastic gourds, wooden or aluminum apartment style commercially made housing are more common today. You can purchase martin houses or build your own from construction plans found on many websites. Some folks may even want to try growing their own bottle gourds.

Location, location, location...this old adage in the real-estate business also holds true in attracting and keeping martins. In general, martins prefer relatively open spaces. If possible, locate your martin house at least forty feet from trees and thirty feet from houses and other buildings. Keep in mind that these birds like to nest in groups, which is the reason that a cluster of gourds or apartment systems work well.

Purple martins like to socialize, so having a power line in the area will give them a place to gather. Putting houses near open water has also been found to be beneficial.

Martin houses should be placed on poles fifteen to thirty feet tall

according to some experts. One of the most important aspects of any martin house is having the ability to raise and lower the house to clean and inspect the compartments. And last but not least, place the house where you can enjoy viewing the martins. For more information on attracting backyard wildlife contact your local Clemson Extension office.

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