

Clippings

Rain gardens in front line against flooding



The rain garden at Shalbourne Primary School in Wiltshire also acts as a natural play area for kids

Gardeners across the country are being enlisted to help stop summer downpours turning into dangerous flash floods.

The government says it fully supports natural flood management systems like rain gardens and is doubling the number of projects it's funding. The Environment Agency is among those behind The Aquifer Partnership (TAP), a three-year project recruiting local residents, schools and businesses to create a green chain of thousands of rain gardens around Brighton, East Sussex.

They're already creating rain gardens in local primary schools and building swales – shallow, richly planted hollows – to slow and absorb water running down a hillside to the north of the city. Now they're also training local people to build rain gardens in their own back yards.

"It's not a solution on its own, but it does help take the pressure off," says Partnership

Development Manager, Susie Howells. "And the more people who do it, the greater impact it will have."

A similar project, 10,000 Raingardens for Scotland, now lists hundreds of rain gardens

across the nation in private gardens, businesses and schools. In Cardiff, Wales, more than 100 rain gardens, built by local and national government organisations under the Greener Grangetown project, divert more than 40 million litres of rainwater from sewers each year.

Rain gardens usually take the form of shallow depressions in free-draining soil, designed to fill with water and then let it soak gradually into the ground. Garden designer and rain garden specialist, Wendy Allen, says despite the name, rain gardens are dry for much of the year, filling with water only after heavy rainfall – so the range of plants is wider than you might think.

She advises damp-lovers like sedges or flag iris for the bottom – otherwise, she says, anything

goes. "Most plants tolerate temporary waterlogging so you can style it to suit your own taste," she says. "It's a way homeowners can make a small

change that adds up to a big difference."

■ Sign up for training at raingarden.uk and download a free guide to creating your own rain garden at raingardens.info

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