
Professional Certificate in Rain Garden Design

Stormwater Management

Stormwater Management is a critical aspect of urban planning and environmental engineering that focuses on controlling and directing stormwater runoff to prevent flooding, erosion, and water pollution. In the context of Rain Garden Design, understanding key terms and vocabulary related to stormwater management is essential for creating effective and sustainable rain gardens. Let's explore some of the most important terms in stormwater management and their relevance to rain garden design.

- 1. Stormwater Runoff:** Stormwater runoff refers to the excess water that flows over the ground surface during and after a storm. This runoff can pick up pollutants, sediment, and debris as it travels, leading to water quality issues in rivers, lakes, and other bodies of water. Rain gardens are designed to capture and treat stormwater runoff before it enters natural water systems.
- 2. Impervious Surfaces:** Impervious surfaces are hard surfaces like roads, parking lots, and rooftops that prevent water from soaking into the ground. These surfaces increase stormwater runoff and can contribute to flooding and pollution. Rain gardens are often installed in areas with high imperviousness to help mitigate these issues.
- 3. Green Infrastructure:** Green infrastructure refers to natural or nature-based solutions for managing stormwater, such as rain gardens, green roofs, permeable pavement, and bioswales. These systems mimic natural hydrological processes and help reduce the impact of urban development on the environment.
- 4. Permeability:** Permeability refers to the ability of a material to allow water to pass through it. In the context of rain garden design, choosing permeable soils and materials is essential for proper infiltration of stormwater and the health of the plants in the garden.
- 5. Biofiltration:** Biofiltration is a process that uses vegetation, soil, and microbes to remove pollutants from stormwater runoff. Rain gardens are a form of biofiltration, as they rely on plants and soil to filter out contaminants and improve water quality.
- 6. Hydrology:** Hydrology is the study of the movement, distribution, and quality of water on Earth. Understanding hydrological processes is crucial for designing effective rain gardens that can capture, store, and treat stormwater runoff.
- 7. Water Quality:** Water quality refers to the chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of water. Rain gardens play a vital role in improving water quality by removing pollutants and excess nutrients from stormwater before it reaches natural water bodies.
- 8. Detention:** Detention is the temporary storage of stormwater to control the rate of runoff and reduce

peak flows. Rain gardens can act as detention basins by capturing and holding stormwater during heavy rain events, helping to prevent flooding downstream.

9. Infiltration: Infiltration is the process by which water seeps into the ground and recharges groundwater supplies. Rain gardens enhance infiltration by allowing stormwater to percolate through the soil, reducing the volume of runoff and replenishing underground aquifers.

10. Hydraulic Conductivity: Hydraulic conductivity is a measure of how easily water can move through soil or other porous materials. High hydraulic conductivity is desirable in rain gardens to promote infiltration and prevent ponding of water on the surface.

11. Overflow: Overflow occurs when a rain garden reaches its storage capacity and excess water spills out. Proper design and sizing of rain gardens are essential to prevent overflow and ensure effective stormwater management.

12. Catchment Area: The catchment area is the area from which stormwater flows into a rain garden. Understanding the size and characteristics of the catchment area is important for designing rain gardens that can effectively capture and treat stormwater runoff.

13. Vegetated Filter Strip: A vegetated filter strip is a narrow area of vegetation designed to slow down and filter stormwater runoff. Rain gardens often incorporate vegetated filter strips around their perimeter to enhance water quality treatment.

14. Native Plants: Native plants are species that naturally occur in a specific region and have adapted to the local climate and soil conditions. Using native plants in rain garden design can improve biodiversity, reduce maintenance requirements, and enhance ecosystem benefits.

15. Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs): Stormwater BMPs are strategies and techniques used to manage stormwater runoff and protect water quality. Rain gardens are considered a best management practice for controlling stormwater and reducing pollution in urban areas.

16. Peak Flow: Peak flow refers to the maximum rate of runoff during a storm event. Rain gardens help attenuate peak flows by capturing and slowing down stormwater runoff, reducing the risk of flooding and erosion downstream.

17. Soil Amendment: Soil amendment involves adding organic matter or other materials to improve soil structure, fertility, and drainage. Proper soil amendment is crucial for creating a healthy growing environment for plants in rain gardens.

18. Hydrological Cycle: The hydrological cycle is the continuous movement of water between the atmosphere, land, and water bodies. Rain gardens play a role in the hydrological cycle by capturing and storing stormwater, which eventually evaporates, transpires through plants, or infiltrates into the ground.

19. **Runoff Coefficient:** The runoff coefficient is a numerical value that represents the fraction of rainfall that becomes runoff. Lowering the runoff coefficient through the use of rain gardens and other green infrastructure can help reduce the volume and velocity of stormwater runoff.

20. **Pre-treatment:** Pre-treatment involves removing solids, debris, and pollutants from stormwater before it enters a treatment system like a rain garden. Pre-treatment measures, such as sediment traps or filter strips, help protect the integrity of rain gardens and prolong their lifespan.

21. **Groundwater Recharge:** Groundwater recharge is the process by which water infiltrates into the ground and replenishes underground aquifers. Rain gardens enhance groundwater recharge by allowing stormwater to percolate through the soil and reach the water table.

22. **Hydrophytic Plants:** Hydrophytic plants are species that thrive in wet or waterlogged conditions. These plants are well-suited for rain garden environments and help promote water infiltration, nutrient uptake, and habitat creation.

23. **Flow Control:** Flow control refers to managing the volume and velocity of stormwater runoff to prevent erosion and flooding. Rain gardens act as flow control measures by capturing and slowing down runoff, allowing it to be released gradually into the environment.

24. **Bioretention:** Bioretention is a stormwater management practice that uses vegetation, soil, and engineered media to capture and treat stormwater runoff. Rain gardens are a form of bioretention system that mimics natural processes to improve water quality.

25. **Phytoremediation:** Phytoremediation is the use of plants to remove contaminants from soil, water, or air. Certain plant species in rain gardens have phytoremediation properties, helping to detoxify stormwater and improve overall environmental health.

26. **Inflow:** Inflow refers to the entry of stormwater runoff into a rain garden. Properly managing inflow rates and volumes is crucial for ensuring the effectiveness of rain gardens in capturing and treating stormwater.

27. **Outflow:** Outflow is the discharge of treated stormwater from a rain garden back into the environment. Monitoring outflow quality and volume is important for assessing the performance of rain gardens and their impact on downstream water bodies.

28. **Swale:** A swale is a shallow ditch or depression designed to convey and manage stormwater runoff. Swales can be incorporated into rain garden design to direct and channel water flow, enhancing infiltration and reducing erosion.

29. **Overflow Mechanism:** An overflow mechanism is a feature built into rain gardens to allow excess water to safely exit the system during heavy rainfall events. Properly designed overflow mechanisms prevent flooding and ensure the long-term functionality of rain gardens.

30. **Hydric Soil:** Hydric soil is soil that is saturated, flooded, or ponded long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions. Rain gardens often contain hydric soils to support the growth of wetland plants and promote natural water treatment processes.
31. **Water Table:** The water table is the underground level at which the soil and rock are saturated with water. Rain gardens can influence the water table by promoting infiltration and groundwater recharge, helping to maintain a healthy hydrological balance.
32. **Runoff Volume Reduction:** Runoff volume reduction refers to the practice of reducing the total amount of stormwater runoff generated by a site. Rain gardens are effective at reducing runoff volume through infiltration, evapotranspiration, and storage of excess water.
33. **Vegetation Density:** Vegetation density in rain gardens refers to the amount and distribution of plants within the garden. Higher vegetation density can enhance water uptake, pollutant removal, and habitat value, making rain gardens more effective at stormwater management.
34. **Water Quality Treatment Train:** A water quality treatment train is a series of stormwater management practices that work together to improve water quality. Rain gardens are often included in treatment trains along with other BMPs like bioswales, permeable pavement, and wet ponds.
35. **Peak Flow Attenuation:** Peak flow attenuation is the process of reducing the peak flow rates of stormwater runoff. Rain gardens attenuate peak flows by capturing and storing excess water, allowing for gradual release back into the environment.
36. **Runoff Capture Efficiency:** Runoff capture efficiency measures the percentage of stormwater runoff that is captured and treated by a rain garden. Maximizing runoff capture efficiency is essential for optimizing the performance of rain gardens and achieving water quality goals.
37. **Water Harvesting:** Water harvesting involves capturing and storing rainwater for beneficial use, such as irrigation or groundwater recharge. Rain gardens can serve as water harvesting systems by collecting stormwater for plant uptake and reducing reliance on potable water sources.
38. **Media Filter:** A media filter is a layer of soil, sand, or engineered media that removes pollutants and contaminants from stormwater as it passes through. Rain gardens utilize media filters to improve water quality and promote infiltration of treated runoff.
39. **Regenerative Design:** Regenerative design is an approach that seeks to restore and enhance ecosystems through sustainable development practices. Rain garden design can incorporate regenerative principles by promoting biodiversity, ecosystem services, and resilience to climate change.
40. **Climate Resilience:** Climate resilience refers to the ability of a system to withstand and adapt to the impacts of climate change, such as increased storm intensity and frequency. Rain gardens contribute to climate resilience by reducing flooding, erosion, and pollution in urban areas.

41. **Maintenance Plan:** A maintenance plan outlines the tasks and schedule for upkeep of a rain garden to ensure its continued functionality and effectiveness. Regular maintenance, such as weeding, mulching, and monitoring inflow and outflow, is essential for long-term success of rain gardens.
42. **Public Outreach:** Public outreach involves engaging and educating the community about the benefits of rain gardens and stormwater management practices. Effective public outreach can increase awareness, support, and participation in rain garden programs, leading to broader environmental impact.
43. **Community Engagement:** Community engagement involves involving local residents, businesses, and organizations in the planning and implementation of rain garden projects. Engaging the community can foster a sense of ownership and stewardship, leading to greater success and sustainability of rain gardens.
44. **Green Space:** Green space refers to areas of land covered with grass, trees, or other vegetation. Rain gardens contribute to green space by adding natural beauty, habitat value, and recreational opportunities to urban environments.
45. **Cost-Benefit Analysis:** A cost-benefit analysis evaluates the financial and non-financial costs and benefits of implementing rain gardens. Assessing the economic, environmental, and social impacts of rain gardens can help decision-makers prioritize investments in stormwater management.
46. **Urban Heat Island Effect:** The urban heat island effect is a phenomenon in which urban areas experience higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas due to human activities and infrastructure. Rain gardens mitigate the urban heat island effect by providing shade, evaporative cooling, and green space in urban environments.
47. **Stormwater Permitting:** Stormwater permitting refers to the regulatory process of obtaining approval for stormwater management practices from local, state, or federal authorities. Compliance with stormwater permits is essential for ensuring that rain gardens meet environmental standards and requirements.
48. **Green Roof:** A green roof is a vegetated roof system that helps manage stormwater, reduce energy consumption, and improve air quality. Green roofs work in conjunction with rain gardens to provide multiple benefits for urban sustainability and resilience.
49. **Water-Energy-Food Nexus:** The water-energy-food nexus is the interconnected relationship between water, energy, and food systems. Rain gardens contribute to the water-energy-food nexus by conserving water, reducing energy use, and supporting local food production through sustainable landscaping practices.
50. **Adaptive Management:** Adaptive management is an iterative approach to planning and decision-making that allows for flexibility and learning through monitoring and feedback. Rain garden projects can benefit from adaptive management strategies to address uncertainties, adapt to changing conditions, and improve long-term performance.

In conclusion, understanding key terms and vocabulary related to stormwater management is essential for designing and implementing effective rain gardens. By incorporating these concepts into rain garden design, professionals can create sustainable, resilient, and environmentally friendly solutions for managing stormwater runoff in urban environments. Continued learning and application of these principles will be crucial for addressing the challenges of urbanization, climate change, and water quality protection in the coming years.