



RAIN GARDEN REBATE PROGRAM

Homeowner Guide

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Overview

The RiverSmart Rain Garden Rebate Program provides District homeowners with funding to retain stormwater on their properties. As rain water moves from our rooftops and yards to our local streams, it picks up pollutants such as oil, fertilizers, and pet waste along the way, becoming what’s known as stormwater. By capturing stormwater onsite, homeowners are helping to decrease the harmful stormwater and sewage overflows that run into surrounding streams and rivers, improving their city and the Chesapeake Bay. Additional rebates are available. See doee.dc.gov/riversmartrebates for more information.

Program Eligibility

Any single-family home in the District of Columbia is eligible, including those who have already received a RiverSmart Homes grant. There is a limit of one rain garden rebate per property.

Rebate Amount

Rebates are issued as a direct reimbursement to homeowners once a project is completed, inspected, and approved. The total rebate amount is determined by the project size. The calculation for a rain garden rebate is based on the square footage of impervious area that will be treated as a result of the project, also called *treatment area*. The treatment area is determined by combining the project area with impervious areas that are directly draining into the project (this may include rooftops, concrete patios, or asphalt driveways).

Rebate Parameters:

- \$3.00 per square foot (sf) treated
- Maximum rebate is \$2,200 (cannot exceed project cost)
- Minimum *treatment area* is 400 sf

Calculation Example: If a 50 sf rain garden is being installed and 500 sf of stormwater is redirected from the roof into the garden through a downspout extension, the project area would be 50 sf and the total treatment area would be 550 sf. The homeowner would receive a \$1,650 rebate (\$3.00 x 550 sf).

Funds are limited. Rebates will be awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Note: If installing a rain garden larger than 75 sf and you’ve already received a Stormwater Audit Report from DOEE that recommends a rain garden, you may combine grant and rebate funding for the project by submitting a single rebate application for the entire project.



Mature RiverSmart Rain Garden

Rebate Process & Installation

Complete the steps outlined below to obtain project approval. Failure to do so may result in disqualification for rebate funds. **The project must be completed within six months of the date of pre-construction approval notification.**

Before Construction Begins

1. Determine project location. See page 6 for helpful web resources.
2. Perform perc test using the worksheet provided on page 2 of the *Application* to ensure project location and soil type are suitable.
3. Select a contractor or determine the equipment you need if DIY (Do It Yourself).
4. Submit your *Application*, including a Design Sketch, Itemized Invoice, Perc Test Worksheet, Rebate Maintenance Agreement, RiverSmart Rewards Sign-Up Sheet, and Before Photo to the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (the Alliance) via email or post. See contact information on page 6.
5. Receive approval from the Alliance to begin project installation (this will require a pre-construction inspection if you have not received a DOEE Stormwater Audit).

After Construction is Complete

1. Notify the Alliance (jalberti@allianceforthebay.org) that construction is complete.
2. Submit After Photos of the project site, a Final Invoice (indicating the project balance is fully paid), and the Project Completion Form.
3. Schedule a post-construction inspection with the Alliance.
4. Expect to receive the rebate check in the mail 2-6 weeks after post-construction approval.

Installation Requirements

The installation of a rain garden can be performed yourself (DIY) or by a hired contractor. Rain gardens must be well designed to function properly. Although experienced contractors are not required, they are highly recommended. Please contact the Alliance for a list of landscaping contractors familiar with the Rain Garden Rebate Program.

Project Guidelines

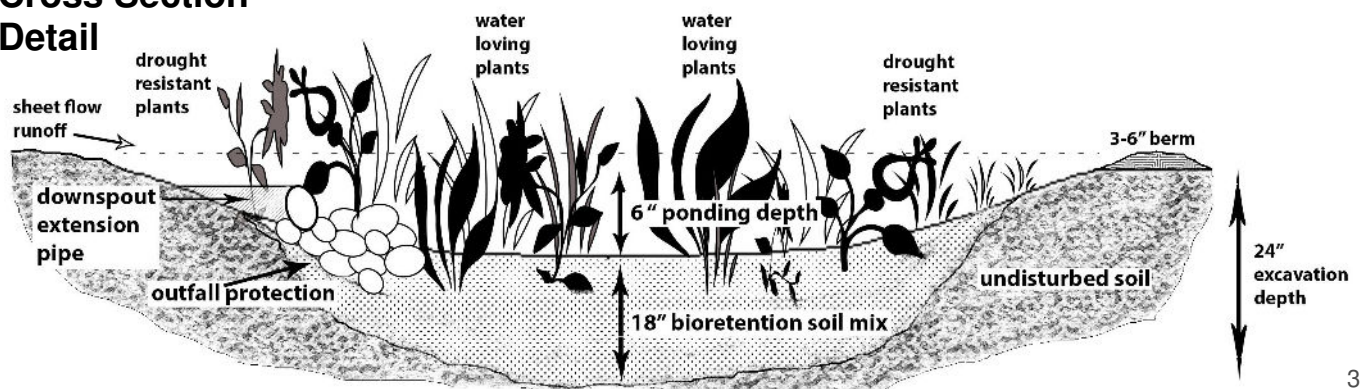
The *Application* lists all the paperwork needed to review and approve a project. Refer to the required specifications outlined below when designing your project. Any application materials that do not meet these requirements will need to be adjusted before the project can be approved for construction. Any changes made after construction approval must be submitted for re-approval. Failure to do so may result in disqualification for rebate funds.

Note: When calculating project size, a good rule-of-thumb is that the area of a rain garden should be at least 10% of the roof area draining into it. For example, if 700 sf are redirected from the roof, then a rain garden should measure at least 70 sf. See page 6 for additional rain garden resources and manuals.

Rain Garden Specifications

- **Location:** Garden must be at least 10 feet (ft) from the foundation and any retaining walls and should be 3 ft from property lines and 3 ft from the public right-of-way. Garden must not sit at lowest point on property, must not allow for overflow into public right-of-way or neighboring properties and must not be placed under the dripline of any trees. *The dripline of a tree is the area located directly under the outer circumference of tree branches. Digging inside the dripline can severely harm tree roots.*
- **Size:** Garden area must be at least 50 sf and large enough to capture the total amount of stormwater directed to it. Treatment area (area draining to the garden plus the garden area) must be at least 400 sf.
- **Depth:** Excavation should be at least 24 inches deep, including 18 inches of bioretention soil mix and 6 inches of ponding space. See design resources on page 6.
- **Fill Material:** Existing soil should be completely removed and replaced with bioretention soil mix (must be 65% sand, 20% topsoil, and 15% compost).
- **Plant Selection:** Plants must be native to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and placed in the garden so that water-loving varieties are at the center of the garden where moisture collects and drought-resistant plants are along the edge where ponding is less likely. A plant list with quantity, sizing, spacing, and species is required. See native plant resources on page 6.
- **Mulch:** Mulch layer must be 2-3 inches of dense undyed material, such as wood chips or shredded hardwood.
- **Downspout Extension:** PVC piping must be firmly attached to the downspout, buried at 1-2 degree downward slope away from the house, and must enter the rain garden above ground into the stone outfall protection area. Piping may not be perforated within 10 ft of the foundation.
- **Outfall Protection:** At least 3 sf of outlet protection, formed using large river rocks, must be placed at downspout outlet to disperse water as it enters the garden.
- **Berm:** Berm must be formed with compact clay, often from contents of excavation, no higher than 6 inches from surrounding area. It must be built on the downslope side of garden and the top should be level with uphill edge of garden. It should allow for sheet overflow when the garden is saturated, rather than channeled overflow. An appropriate overflow area must exist downslope of the garden and the berm should not border walkways or property lines.

Cross Section Detail



Design Sketch Requirements

The design sketch can be hand drawn or computer generated. It must illustrate all of the project specific requirements outlined on page 3 to be considered complete (see example design sketch below). Additionally, it must include:

- Homeowner name, address, and audit number (if a stormwater audit has been conducted);
- Dimensions of project and drainage area from roof and other drainage sources;
- Distance from structures, property lines, and public space;
- Location of downspout and downspout extension; and
- Location descriptors (front yard, back yard, fence, alley, etc.).

Example

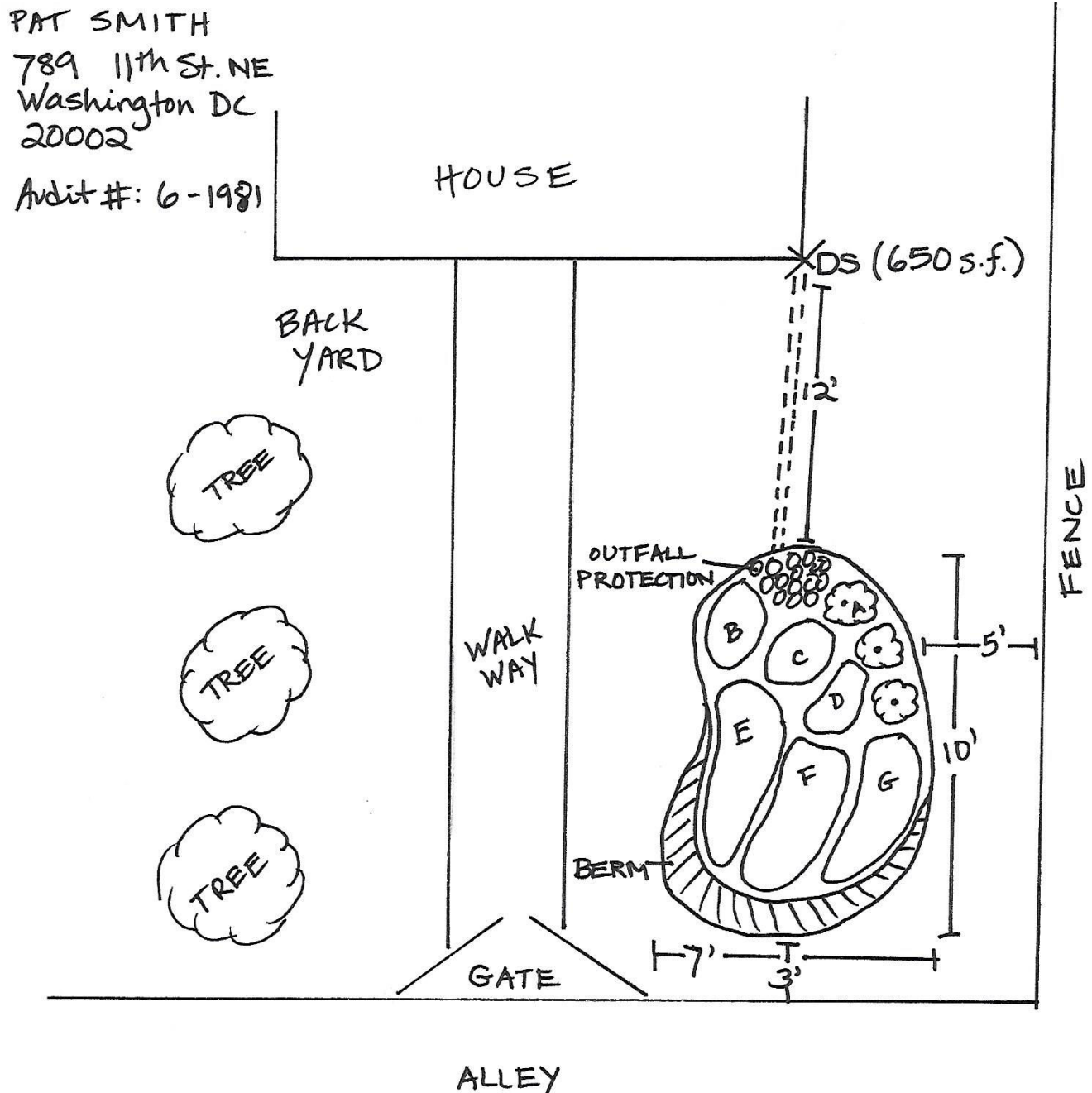


Photo Guidelines

We rely on clear, accurate, and functional *before* and *after* photos to assess project sites and determine the eligibility, status, and quality of the projects we fund. Please follow the guidelines laid out here. **Failure to do so may lead to additional steps and delay construction and/or receipt of rebate.**

DO:

- Submit photos as separate JPG files, saved as “Property Owner Last Name – Before Photo # – Date.jpg”
- Take before and after photos from the same angle, distance, and orientation (vertical/horizontal) such that they can be used to compare the same project area
- Include before and after photos of any downspout directed towards project
- Take photos from a distance that shows the item being highlighted in the context of the entire yard or space.

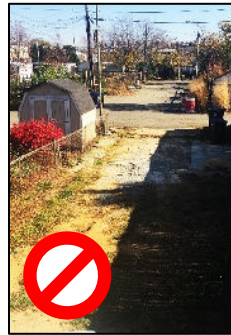
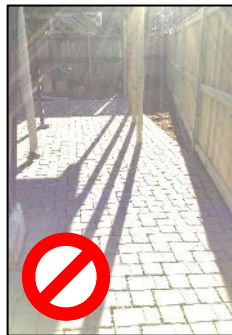


We want to see the transformation of a space from the **SAME DISTANCE, SAME ANGLE, and SAME ORIENTATION**



AVOID:

- Crooked or blurry photos
- Sun glare and over-exposure
- High contrast light and shadow
- Cutting off part of the project



TIPS:

- Use the horizon to straighten your photo. If you can't see it, find a horizontal or vertical landmark (side of a building, door, fence line, window) to use as a guide
- Shoot with the sun behind you and shining on the project

Know Your Options

Helpful web resources are listed below. For additional assistance with your rebate project, please contact the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay.

Native Plants

- **Native Plant Center:**
www.nativeplantcenter.net
- **Chesapeake Native Plant Guide:**
<https://www.fws.gov/Chesapeakebay/pdf/NativePlantsforWildlifeHabitatandConservationLandscaping.pdf>

Rain Gardens

- **Rain Garden Design Guide:**
<https://www.epa.gov/soakuptherain/soak-rain-rain-gardens>
- **Rain Garden Information and Installation Guide:**
www.stormwater.allianceforthebay.org/take-action/installations/rain-gardens
- **How to Install a Rain Garden Video:**
www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqjXiWESK6E

"Thank you for the excellent job you did on our rain garden. The landscaping and plant arrangement is beautiful and has definitely done its job over the past few days with the heavy rain storms! I am looking forward to how it will look over the different seasons and as it fills out. The entire experience has been a good one, from the initial contact through to the project completion. Thank you again!"

- Sheila O., RiverSmart Homeowner

Get in Touch!

Please don't hesitate to contact us with additional questions or concerns. We welcome your feedback and would appreciate hearing about your experience as a participant in the RiverSmart Rebate Program.

Program Contact

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Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

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Phone
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Annapolis, MD 21403
443-949-0575

Web
www.allianceforthebay.org/riversmartrebates

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I use my own contractor?

A: Yes. You may use your own contractor, but we do recommend selecting a contractor with experience installing the type of project you are pursuing, as the functionality and endurance for rain gardens are directly linked to the skill with which they are installed.

Q: Can grant and rebate projects be combined?

A: Yes, provided the project meets the requirements for both programs. A Stormwater Audit through DOEE is required for a grant project. If applying for a combined rebate/grant rain garden, please use one rebate application for the entire project.

Q: I already installed a project on my property. Can I get rebate funding retroactively?

A: Yes, provided that you have proof your project was installed no more than one year prior to your application and your project meets all program requirements.

Q: What is the typical timeline?

A: The rebate program timeline is designed to move at the homeowner's pace and is dependent on how quickly homeowners move through the steps outlined on page 2. The timing of all projects will be affected by season, weather, and the availability of contractors and RiverSmart staff at any given time. On average, you can expect it to take 2-3 weeks for your rebate application to be reviewed and approved for construction, 2-3 weeks for post-construction approval, and 2-6 weeks to receive your rebate check once the project has been approved.

Q: Do I need any permits for my RiverSmart Homes project?

A: Homeowners are ultimately responsible for getting any permits that are required. Visit the District Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs' Homeowner's Center to determine the permits required for your project.