

# Rain Wise

Managing Storm Water at Home



## RainWise Rebates

Seattle residents may be eligible for rebates to hire a trained RainWise contractor to install a rain garden or cistern. See if your property is eligible, and apply at

[www.rainwise.seattle.gov](http://www.rainwise.seattle.gov)



# Why be RainWise?



*reduce flooding*



*protect property*



*restore our waters  
for people...*



*...and wildlife*

## Let the rain soak in

Rain that falls on our roofs, roads, driveways, and compacted soils collects quickly, and then runs off down ditches and pipes. During big rain storms this “storm water” can back up and flood homes, cause sewer overflows, and erode hillsides and stream banks. It also carries dirt, oil and metals from cars, lawn chemicals, cleaners, and pet waste into Seattle’s salmon-spawning streams and swimming beaches.

We can all slow and clean the rain runoff from our homes by helping the rain soak into the soil, just like it does in our native forests.



How can we make this...



...work more like this?

## Slow it, spread it, filter it, soak it in

In the forest, rain gets slowed down by tree needles and leaves, then spread out over spongy soils and plants that filter out pollution, slowly letting the rain seep down into the groundwater that keeps our streams running cool all summer. We can help our city work more like the forest by taking some simple steps around our homes and neighborhoods – by being RainWise.

### What’s the Problem?

#### **Our climate is changing**

A warming world means changing rainfall patterns. Our region may get more winter rain, and stronger storms that can produce the intense rainfall that causes flooding.

#### **Seattle is getting denser**

As more people move in, we’re adding more “impervious surface” (roofs and pavement that increase storm runoff), not just in big new developments, but around all our neighborhoods.

#### **We’re all in this together!**

Seattle has tough requirements for stormwater management in new construction, businesses, and in our public roads and right-of-ways. But single family properties still make up about 75% of Seattle’s private land, so what we all do at home really does make a difference!



*Labeling storm drain, “Dump No Waste – Drains to Stream”*



## Plant a tree

Trees, especially conifers, absorb and evaporate rainfall, slowing runoff. Choose a tree that will fit your site when fully grown.

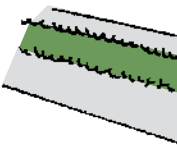
## Reduce paved area

Consider removing unnecessary paved areas around your home. Driveways can be narrower, or just two paved tracks with grass in between.



## Improve your soil with compost and mulch

When planting, mix in several inches of compost. On existing beds, mulch regularly with compost, leaves, or wood chips. Both help more rain soak into the soil.

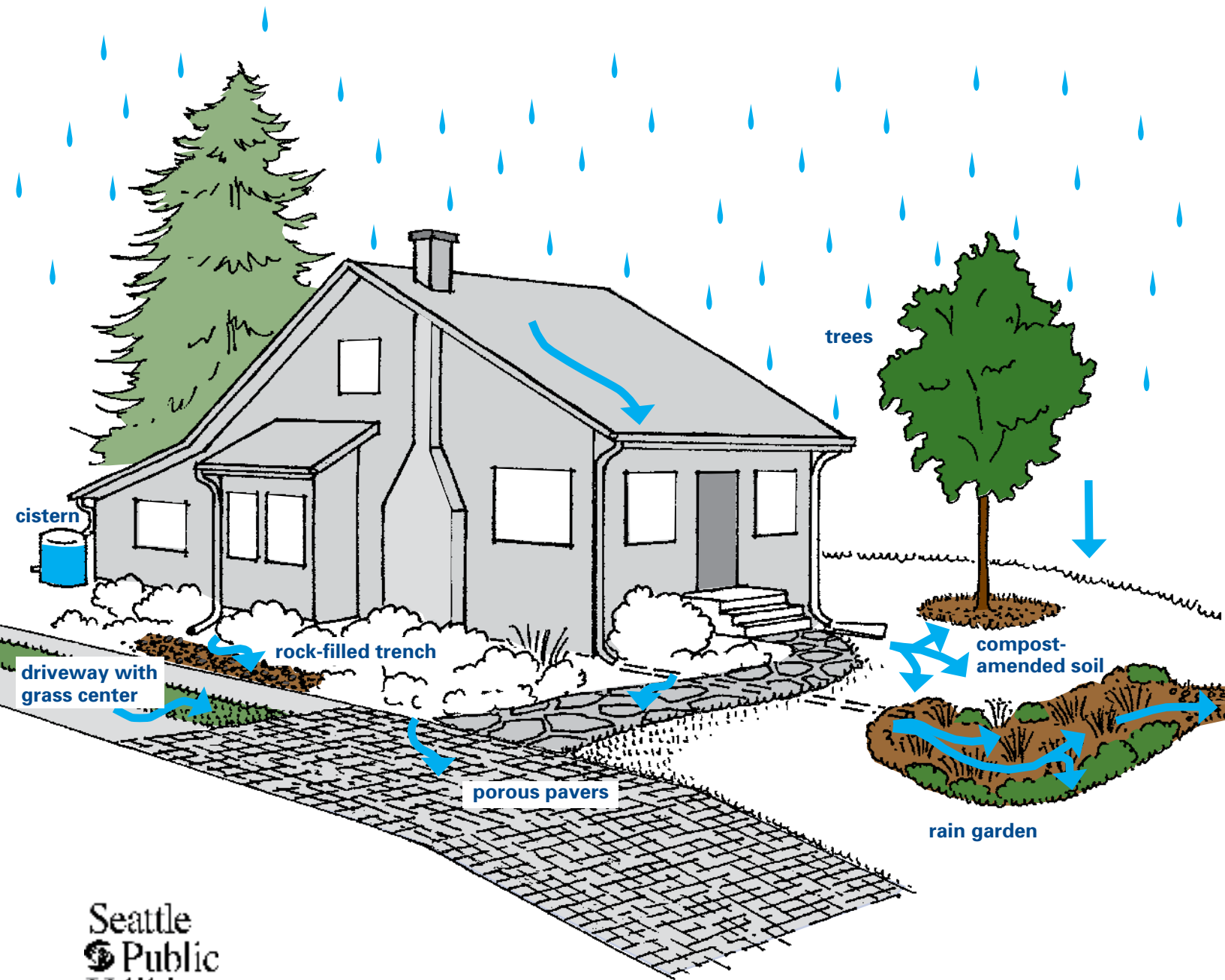


## Try porous paving options

Porous pavers, flagstone, gravel, or reinforced grass-with-paver options all let the rain soak through patios, walkways, or driveways into the soil.

rain: slow it, spread it, filter it, soak it in...

# Be Rain Wise – here's how you can help



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Utilities

**Caution: Be RainWise, Be Safe — Don't Flood Your Neighbors!**

# Safely direct downspout runoff to a cistern or rain garden

- ☑ **Make sure that big rain storms can still flow to the storm drain:** Whether you build a rain garden or install a cistern, make sure the overflow can drain safely. When a big rain comes, water should be able to overflow downhill to the street or storm drain, without flooding sidewalks or your neighbor's property.
- ☑ **Be careful around steep slopes and slide areas, and near house foundations:** In those areas, it's better not to use concentrated infiltration methods like rain gardens, rock-filled trenches, or cisterns.
- ☑ **If you disconnect your downspouts from the sewer, do it safely:** If your downspouts are plumbed to the sewer now, you need to take some key precautions to avoid causing flooding or landslide problems if you disconnect. See the RainWise website for a fact sheet on disconnecting downspouts safely in Seattle.

**Install a cistern** Cisterns can hold several hundred gallons of roof runoff, slowly releasing it into the ground. Direct overflows into your landscape, away from foundations or neighbors.



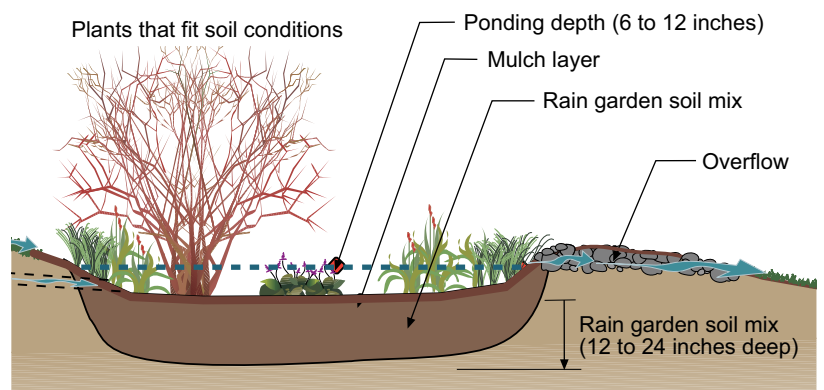
**Build a rain garden** Rain gardens are shallow depressions that can hold and soak up runoff from roofs or driveways. They have deep, compost-amended soils, and are landscaped with plants that fit your yard and the soil, sun, and moisture conditions.

overflow



## Use a rock-filled trench

In areas too small for a rain garden, a rock-filled trench can help downspout or driveway runoff soak in.



*For fact sheets with details on all of these methods, please visit Seattle Public Utilities website [www.seattle.gov/util/rainwise](http://www.seattle.gov/util/rainwise) or call the Garden Hotline at (206) 633-0224.*

## Keep it Clean – prevent pollution to restore our waters

Besides slowing the flow of storm runoff, it's also important to keep it clean, to protect our streams, lakes, and Puget Sound. Here's how you can help:

- 💧 **Don't use pesticides** like "weed & feed" or other weed and bug killers – learn about less toxic options by calling the Garden Hotline.
- 💧 **Fertilize moderately** – more is not better, and fertilizers can pollute our waterways. Look for the words "natural organic" or "slow-release" to find less-polluting products, for healthier yards and waterways.
- 💧 **Clean up pet waste.** Bag and dispose of it, or bury it at least 6 inches deep in the soil to decompose safely. Call the Garden Hotline for information on safe pet waste composting systems.
- 💧 **Keep soap, cleaners, paints, etc. out of storm drains.** Direct soapy water into lawns or landscape beds to break down in the soil. Even better, wash cars at a car wash. Use the least-toxic cleaning products available.
- 💧 **Fix oil and fluid leaks in cars** and equipment – even a little oil can do a lot of harm if it gets into our streams.



*Even if you don't live right next to a stream, lake, or Puget Sound, that's where runoff from all our homes and yards goes. So let's keep it clean!*

## Maintain Your RainWise System – to keep it working

Whether it's a simple mulch layer, a cistern, or rain garden, your annual maintenance practices can help reduce storm runoff and keep it clean. Renew mulch layers, weed rain gardens, sweep off porous paving, check valves, make sure inlets and gutters aren't clogged. Remember to go out in the first big rain storm of fall, to make sure that everything is flowing where it should. Work with neighbors to keep leaves and debris out of storm drains. Help keep our storm water drainage system flowing.

## Want to Learn More?

Fact sheets with pictures and "how to" instructions for each of the RainWise methods described here are available online, along with links to RainWise Tools to help you plan your project, at [www.seattle.gov/util/rainwise](http://www.seattle.gov/util/rainwise) or call Seattle Public Utilities' Garden Hotline at (206) 633-0224.

Available in alternate formats on request  
(206) 633-0224 TTY: (206) 233-7241

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King County



*SeaStreet swale cleans and slows street runoff before it runs into Pipers Creek*

## What is the City doing?

Seattle has a well-maintained drainage system. Your drainage rates are funding a number of capital improvement projects to increase capacity in key areas, reduce sewer overflows, protect streams, and reduce flooding and property damage. "Natural Drainage System" projects, like the planted swales you may have seen, are one way to reduce storm flow and clean up street runoff. We need your help to slow and clean rain runoff from private property, to make our whole system work better.



*Help the rain soak in, reduce flooding, protect property, and restore our waters – be RainWise!*