



Sweetbay Magnolia  
*Magnolia virginiana*

Rain gardens offer a highly functional way to help protect water quality and prevent flooding. When designing a rain garden, think of how it will fit into your home's overall landscape design. When choosing plants for the garden, it is also important to consider the mature height and width for proper placement and spacing. Soil conditions in rain gardens alternate between wet and dry, making them tough places for many plants to grow. The plants listed below are a selection of plants for the Sarasota area that are adapted to these conditions, though some plants will tolerate more moisture than others. Each plant is marked according to its flooding tolerance:

1. tolerant of extended drought once established
2. only tolerant of brief flooding
3. tolerant of longer flooding

Some plants require sun (s), some tolerate sun to light shade (s-sh), while others perform best under shady (sh) conditions. All of the plants listed are native to Florida in wetland habitats, and most are readily available at local native plant nurseries. Wetland plants can generally grow well in moist or well-drained soils, whereas plants adapted to dry soils rarely survive in soggy conditions. How wet a rain garden stays will vary considerably depending on the site where it is installed. Rain gardens created on sandy soils will rarely hold water for more than a few hours. On these sites it is most important to choose plants for their drought tolerance. Remember you are not limited to planting just within the excavated

area! Extending plantings around this area will help the rain garden to blend in with the overall landscape.

### Trees

#### **Deciduous**

Red Maple (2) – *Acer rubrum* (s-sh)

River Birch (1,3) – *Betula nigra* (s)

Black Gum (2) – *Nyssa sylvatica* (s-sh)

Bald Cypress (1,3) – *Taxodium distichum* (s/sh)

#### **Evergreen**

Dahoon Holly (2) - *Ilex cassine* (s-sh)

Yaupon Holly (1,2) – *Ilex vomitoria* (s-sh)

Sweetbay Magnolia (1,2) – *Magnolia virginiana* (s-sh)

Longleaf Pine (1,2) – *Pinus palustris* (s)

Cabbage Palm (1,3) – *Sabal palmetto* (s)

### Shrubs

#### **Deciduous**

Beautyberry (1,2) – *Callicarpa americana* (s-sh)

Buttonbush (3) – *Cephalanthus occidentalis* (s-sh)

Virginia Willow (3) – *Itea virginica* (sh)

Snowbell (3) – *Styrax americana* (sh)

#### **Evergreen**

Gallberry (2) – *Ilex glabra* (s-sh)

Wax Myrtle (1,2) – *Myrica cerifera* (s-sh)

Dwarf Palmetto (3) – *Sabal minor* (sh)

Palmetto (1,2) – *Serenoa repens* (s-sh)

Walter's Viburnum (2,3) – *Viburnum obovatum* (s-sh)



Walter's Viburnum  
*Viburnum obovatum*

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### **Perennials**

Swamp Milkweed (3) – *Asclepias incarnata* (s)  
 Climbing Aster (3) – *Aster carolinianus* (s-sh)  
 Tickseed (1,2) – *Coreopsis lanceolata* (s)  
 Swamp Sunflower (3) – *Helianthus angustifolius* (s)  
 Scarlet Hibiscus (3) – *Hibiscus coccineus* (s)  
 Blue Flag Iris (3) – *Iris virginica* (s-sh)  
 Cinnamon Fern (3) – *Osmunda cinnamomea* (sh)  
 Royal Fern (3) – *Osmunda regalis* (s)

*The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program is based on Environmental Landscape Management (ELM) practices, and was developed in 1992 by the University of Florida, Sarasota Bay and Tampa Bay National Estuary programs, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Southwest Florida Water Management District, and local governments. The main objective of the program is to educate the public on how to develop and maintain sustainable landscapes that reduce the nutrient load in stormwater runoff and impact the environment as little as possible.*

*Valuable natural resources are put at risk everyday by the decisions made in the landscape. It has been documented that certain landscaping practices contribute to many different forms of air, noise and water pollution. The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program is working to change behavior by teaching alternative forms of design and maintenance practices to create and sustain a landscape that is more ecologically in step with the surrounding environment.*

*For more information about the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program and other programs available at UF/IFAS Sarasota County Extension, visit our website at <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu>*

Rudbeckia (1,2) – *Rudbeckia hirta* (s-sh)  
 Blue-eyed Grass (2) – *Sisyrinchium angustifolium* (s)  
 Ironweed (3) – *Vernonia gigantea* (s-sh)

### **Ornamental Grasses**

River Oats (1,3) – *Chasmanthium latifolium* (s)  
 Muhly Grass (1,2) – *Muhlenbergia capillaries* (s)  
 Sand Cordgrass (1,3) – *Spartina bakeri* (s)



Sand Cordgrass  
*Spartina bakeri*

A rain garden requires the same amount of maintenance as the rest of your garden. The plants will require regular watering during the establishment period, for the first 60 days or so. Regular weeding may be needed during the first two years, until the plants begin to mature and spread. Mulch will help suppress weed growth, and will also keep the soil moist, stabilize soil temperatures, and reduce soil compaction. After the growing season, stems and seeds can be left for wildlife cover, bird food and re-seeding.

### **Resources:**

- ◇ *Rain Barrels and Rain Gardens*. Town of Ft. Myers Beach.
- ◇ *Rain Gardens*. West Michigan Environmental Action Council.
- ◇ *Rain Gardens*. Think About Personal Pollution (TAPP), Tallahassee.
- ◇ *Hunt, W. F. Designing Rain Gardens*. North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service.



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