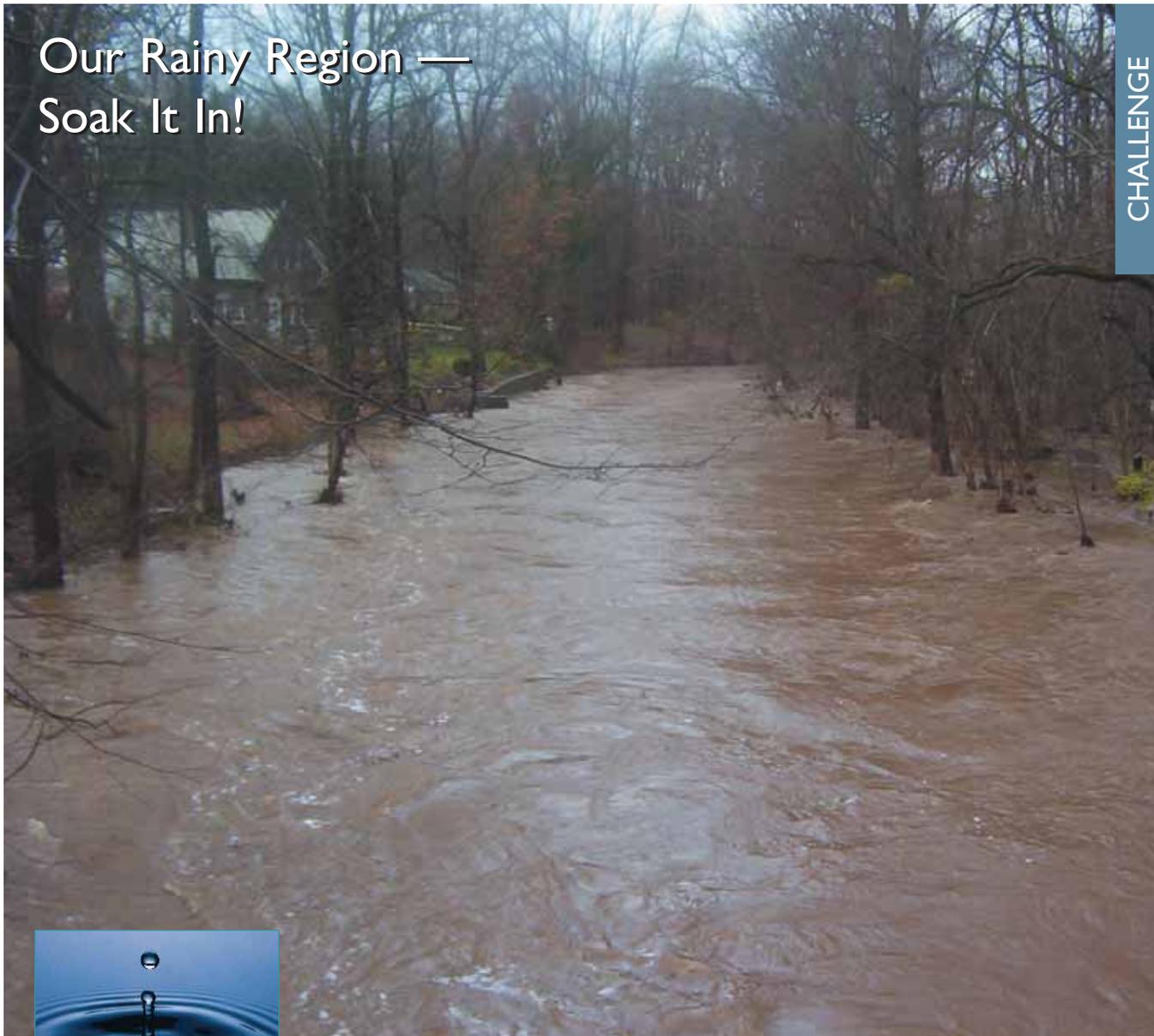


# Our Rainy Region — Soak It In!

CHALLENGE



The best thing one can do when it's raining is to let it rain.  
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Landscaping with water will yield a number of outcomes benefiting not only the homeowner but also the natural environment in the yard and the greater watershed.

Water is a vital component of all ecosystems and most especially in the wetland plant communities found throughout our rich region. In the water-etched hills and valleys of our Piedmont and Coastal Plain region, the accumulating of water from the most moderate of storms is magnified by the extent of impervious surfaces. The natural water cycle is all but invisible as gutters and grooves carry the torrent of roof runoff and driveway drainage to some far away place.

Philadelphia receives an average of 42 inches of rain each year. The water from these rains that often runs off of hard surfaces can be captured, used, and persuaded to seep gently into the ground, just as it does in a forest where it slowly replenishes groundwater and percolates into underground aquifers. It may also serve to nurture water-loving plants in a low-lying area in the yard; with the use of natural or formed depressions, the stage is set for a wonderful rain garden.



Porous pavers reduce runoff from driveways and parking lots.

STEVEN J. SAFFIER

## NOTES



EDIE PARNUM

Ponds can be enhanced by a colorful variety of native plants. Photo by Edie Parnum, Backyards for Nature, Valley Forge Audubon Society.

Landscaping with water will yield a number of outcomes benefiting not only the homeowner but also the natural environment in the yard and the greater watershed. Sunny rain gardens and wet meadows can host a colorful variety of native plants. Vernal or spring pools hold their water for a few months during spring and early summer and can provide important breeding grounds for frogs, salamanders, and a variety of insects. Shady wet woodlands can be home to

specialized native plants with unique adaptations.

Here are some other benefits of landscaping with rain:

- **Conserves water and protects its quality** — Conscientious water management helps retain supplies of freshwater and allows quantities to be filtered and slowly replenish groundwater supplies. This is infinitely more valuable than torrents of water entering drainage channels,

## Plants for a rain garden

### TIP

To calculate how many gallons of rainwater runs off your roof each year, first figure out your roof's square footage, then multiply that number by 623. Next, divide the product by 1,000, and multiply the result by the number of annual inches of rainfall in your location. On average, the Philadelphia region receives 42 inches of rain annually (Source: NOAA).



MAGGIE STRUCKER

New York ironweed

Common name	Scientific name
<b>Perennials</b>	
Swamp milkweed	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>
New England aster	<i>Aster novae-angliae</i>
Turtlehead	<i>Chelone</i> species
Boneset	<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>
Joe-pye weed	<i>Eupatorium fistulosum</i>
Swamp sunflower	<i>Helianthus augustifolius</i>
Blue flag iris	<i>Iris versicolor</i>
Cardinal flower	<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>
Virginia bluebells	<i>Mertensia virginica</i>
Allegheny monkey flower	<i>Mimulus ringens</i>
Beebalm	<i>Monarda didyma</i>
Cutleaf coneflower	<i>Rudbeckia laciniata</i>
New York ironweed	<i>Vernonia noveboracensis</i>
<b>Trees and Shrubs</b>	
Red maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>
Buttonbush	<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>
Sweet pepperbush	<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>
Red-osier dogwood	<i>Cornus sericea</i>
Winterberry	<i>Ilex verticillata</i>
Arrowwood	<i>Viburnum dentatum</i>
Witherod viburnum	<i>Viburnum cassinoides</i>
<b>Grasses</b>	
Lurid sedge	<i>Carex lurida</i>





# The Dwyers — Going With The Flow

CHAMPION



MAGGIE STRUCKER

MAGGIE STRUCKER

AMBLER

This one-and-a-half-acre site has been transformed from a muddy mess to a living world that is filled with music and movement day and night...

It was an August day when Bill and Alexa Dwyer bought their home in a pretty Ambler neighborhood with a big yard for their children and some great old trees. But when spring rains came, the yard became so saturated their children could not use it, and entire soggy sections could not be mowed for months.

It quickly became evident to the Dwyers that their property was shaped

much like a bowl, catching most of the runoff from the neighboring properties. The first thought was to get heavy equipment in to re-grade it, but the township ordinances presented many challenges for compliance. A friend suggested they contact Larry Weaner, a landscape architect whose projects were noted for using native plants and natural habitats, to come up with a possible solution.



The Dwyers' backyard is a vibrant sanctuary.



ALL PHOTOS: MAGGIE STRUCKER



## Take a dip in Bill's wetland tips

- Carefully nurture first-year plantings especially in an unusually dry season. There was great effort spent watering the young plants.
- Channel natural rainwater flow into dedicated habitat areas.
- Flag native seedlings before you mow to encourage growth; if conditions allow, reuse the trees elsewhere in the yard.
- Create areas of refuge within a pond to protect fish from predators.
- Occasional pruning will help maintain mature trees and prevent damage caused by dropping branches.
- Use hedgerows of native shrubs instead of fencing to screen unattractive areas.

water into the natural low spot of the Dwyer's yard, fortifying the wetland. There are contoured sections of wildflowers mingled with lawn areas where the children play and a small footbridge to cross the waterway.

The Dwyers have been living with this garden now for several years. When asked his favorite part, Bill said the garden is “just very peaceful.” He loves the sound of water and watching the garden progress through the seasons. It

has also become a favorite spot for local wildlife. “There’s a party out here every day and night,” comments Bill, just as a bullfrog jumps into the pond. A curious but often thwarted Great Blue Heron regularly visits to eye the fish while hummingbirds and butterflies compete for nectar amongst the flowers. This one-and-a-half-acre site has been transformed from a muddy mess to a living world that is filled with music and movement day and night, season to season.



A small footbridge provides a link to further exploration.

MAGGIE STRUCKER