

# Conservation Newsletter



**Hillsborough  
Soil & Water**  
Conservation District  
Florida



*Photo: North Anclote Sandbar*

## Rain Gardens!

A rain garden is a garden of native shrubs, perennials, and flowers planted in a small depression, which is generally formed on a natural slope. It is designed to temporarily hold and soak in rain water runoff that flows from roofs, driveways, patios or lawns. Rain gardens are effective in removing up to 90% of nutrients and chemicals and up to 80% of sediments from the rainwater runoff. Compared to a conventional lawn, rain gardens allow for 30% more water to soak into the ground.

A rain garden is not a water garden. Nor is it a pond or a wetland. Conversely, a rain garden is dry most of the time. It typically holds water only during and following a rainfall event. Because rain gardens will drain within 12-48 hours, they prevent the breeding of mosquitoes.

Rain gardens are an easy way to return water to our aquifer, reduce erosion, and help prevent stormwater runoff.

Running down the driveway or patio, rainwater can pick up lawn chemicals and pesticides. A rain garden is basically a low section of the landscape planted with native plants that like to get their "feet" wet. cont pg 6

**Welcome to HSWCD's quarterly  
Conservation Newsletter published by  
HSWCD!**

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### **Upcoming Events:**

Board Meetings (open to public)  
June 2 National Garden Week  
June National Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Mth  
Aug 1 National Water Quality Month

### **Looking for more Resources?**

[Backyard Conservationist](#)  
[Producers Resources \(NRCS etc\)](#)  
[Teaching Resources \(Scouts too\)](#)  
[Other Resources](#)

## How does a rain garden work?

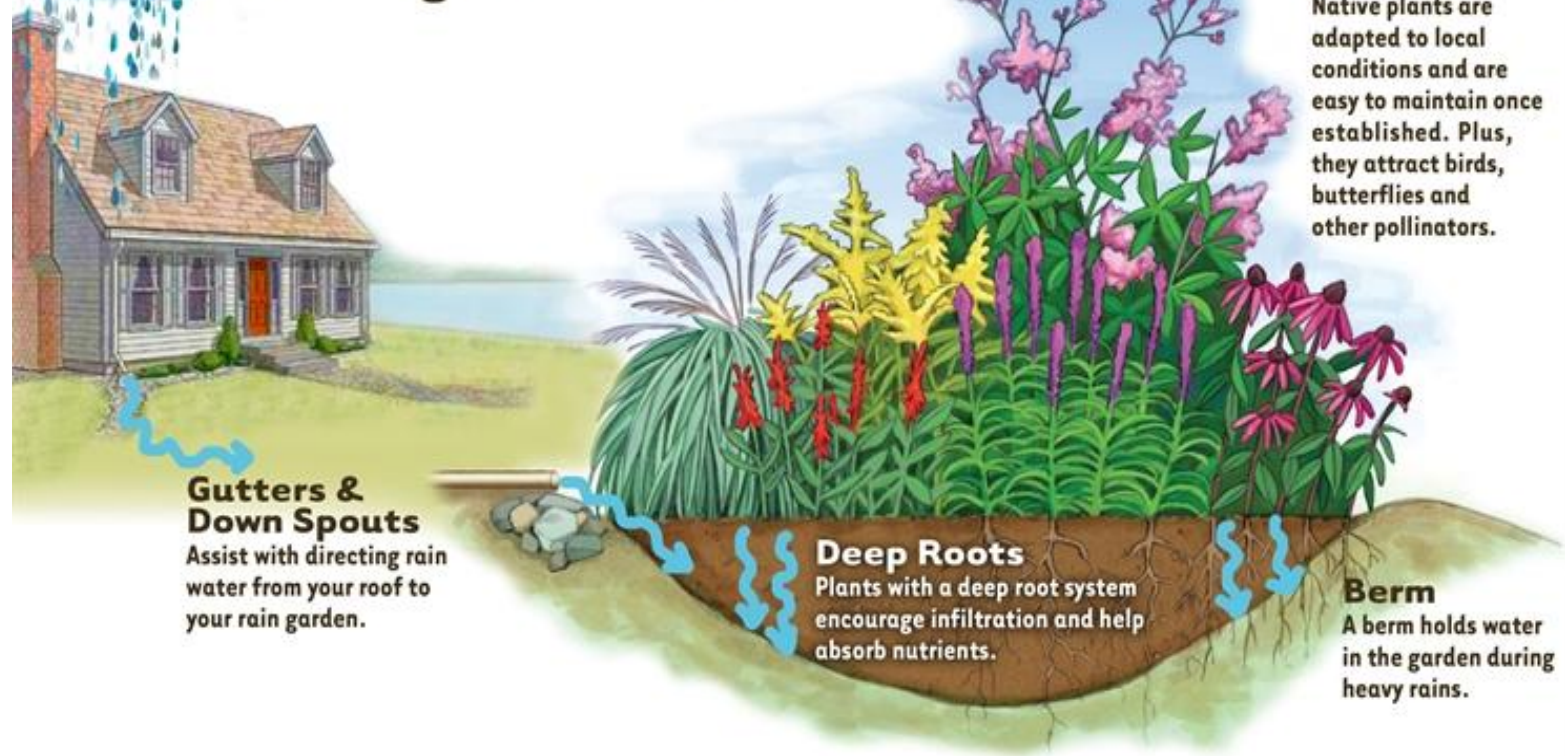


Image Credit: Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council



## About HSWCD

The 1930's Dust Bowl disaster spurred the U.S. Congress to declare soil and water conservation a national policy and priority in 1935. To elicit the active support of landowners on a local level, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) serving conservation needs at a county level were created to work in partnership with the federal government. Today there are nearly 3,000 conservation districts nationwide dedicated to wisely using soil and water resources and involved in efforts as varied as their conservation needs and the local citizenry they serve. The authority to create Florida's SWCDs' was established in 1937 under Chapter 582, F.S.

There are currently 51 SWCDs in the state. These SWCD were created to serve as local sponsors partnered with the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to promote sound management and conservation of soil and water resources on rural lands within local areas. Those missions have expanded overtime to address a wide range of natural resource values including suburban and urban areas to achieve that mission. The HSWCD District leverages its resources in partnership with a wide variety of governmental agencies from profit and nonprofit entities, agricultural trade organizations, and educational institutions. Some examples of activities include: "Dollars for Dirt" (FDACS, NRCS) programs to enhance soil and water characteristics on agriculture properties, educational, and outreach programs.

### HSWCD Supervisors:

Ryan Gill, Chair, District 2

Adam Young, Vice Chair, District 3

Robert "Myke" Morris, Treasurer, District 4

Christopher "Bear" McCullough, District 1

Mark Proctor, District 5

### HSWCD Office Staff

Dr. Joe Walsh, Executive Director

Kathy Eckdahl, Sr Adm Specialist

Linda Chion, HSWCD Staff

Is your farm or ranch prepared for hurricane season? It is important to consider hurricane prep for farms before the storm. As the 2022 hurricane season starts at a leisurely pace, there's talk of what the rest of the season holds. Taking a proactive approach to disaster planning can help your farm or ranch weather the storm. We know the bread and water shelves are often empty right before a hurricane hits and it takes some time to restock. That may be the case with your farm supplies as well. Farmers and ranchers should have enough supplies to get by for at least a week after experiencing a major storm. Whether you are a hurricane newbie or veteran, here are some helpful tips:

## Before the Storm:

- Check that **generators** and **chainsaws** are working properly.
- **Stock up on fuel** for tractors, generators, and other equipment. Don't forget about mixed fuel for certain equipment.
- Scout for potential **debris** and secure it before the storm. Be proactive to minimize damages. Bring equipment you may need (chain saw, ladder, toolbox, etc.) to a secure location in or near the house.
- **Secure buildings** like greenhouses, shops, and barns.
- **Create a plan.** Determine if you will evacuate – if you do so, leave with enough time to get to safety before the storm. Make sure all animals have current immunizations and Coggins tests to take with you if you evacuate them.
- **Locate and protect important paperwork.** Insurance, financials, records, etc. can be backed up on computers and paper files can be placed into waterproof containers or bags. Document inventory of farm buildings, vehicles, equipment, and livestock before a disaster occurs (this will help when requesting disaster aid).
- **Create a list of emergency contacts** including your veterinarian, Farm Service Agency, your employees and their emergency contacts, and utility company.
- Become aware of the **FSA Disaster Assistance Programs**

## Protecting Livestock

- Be sure to **check fences** and stock up on basic fence repair materials.
- **The safest place for livestock is in open pastures with secure fences.** It should have high areas to get out of flooding and be away from potential debris and possible downed powerlines. Barns are not always structurally sound to withstand high winds and can collapse, causing animal injury or death.
- **Poultry facilities should have adequate ventilation.** Provide animals with food and clean water.
- **Add identification to livestock** in case of downed fences. A registered brand is your best bet, but luggage tags braided into tails or manes, ear tags with contact information, or even a paint stick/non-toxic spray paint can be used to mark the animals with your contact information.
- **Have an emergency supply box** accessible with halters, leads, tape, rope, tarps, fly spray, and animal medical supplies.
- **Stock up on extra feed and water.** This includes livestock feed as well as your farm dog/cat food. Wandering animals may be deprived of food and water for extended periods. Water is essential.

## After the Storm:

- **Document any losses or damages.** Save receipts for repairs and clean up services. These will be needed for insurance claims and federal disaster programs.
- **Be cautious of downed powerlines.** Do not exit your vehicle if you are near a downed powerline. Contact your utility company or emergency personnel.
- **Report damage and losses to your Farm Service Agency.** Depending on your request, reporting may be required as early as 72 hours after the storm to be eligible for disaster assistance. For more information on disaster assistance programs, visit: <https://www.farmers.gov/protection-recovery/hurricane>

For more information on hurricane preparedness: [https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/archive/hot\\_topics/disaster\\_prep/hurricane\\_prep\\_ag.shtml](https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/archive/hot_topics/disaster_prep/hurricane_prep_ag.shtml)

by Allie Williams September 8, 2022

Living in Florida the reality is we must keep hurricane season in mind. Hurricanes in general can be very stressful for families, thus learning how to react to them in a calm and informed manner will teach children to do the same. Since children learn through behavior they see or experience, it is important that we stay poised and teach our children the right way to react in emergency situations such as hurricane season.

In Florida hurricane season lasts from June 1 to November 30 and reaches its peak during August and September. So, what exactly is a hurricane? Well, the National Ocean Service explains “hurricanes are powerhouse weather events that suck heat from tropical waters to fuel their fury. These violent storms form over the ocean, often beginning as a tropical wave—a low pressure area that moves through the moisture-rich tropics, possibly enhancing shower and thunderstorm activity” (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 2021). Therefore, we must be prepared to act fast while ensuring everyone’s safety. When preparing and reacting to a hurricane threat or emergency situation think of the following acronym.

- ***S-Smooth the way.*** You want to make sure that you are being proactive instead of reactive by preparing your family with emergency equipment such as flashlights, generators, dry food, water, etc.
- ***T-Think fast.*** In emergency situations where you might have to evacuate your home, you want to think fast but remain calm so that you can easily communicate a plan with your children.
- ***O-Open.*** Keep an open mind as your plans may change along the way and you might have to improvise.
- ***R-Routine.*** Try to adhere to your normal routine as much as possible, while taking necessary precautionary measures. This will allow children to remain calm without disrupting their environment.
- ***M-Monitor.*** Monitor your children and your surroundings along with new coverage or radio coverage to know when it is safe to return to your home or normal day-to-day activities.

Keeping children informed and aware will not only help the situation but will also develop their coping skills to emergency situations if they arise later on.

by **Joanna Courtemanche** July 6, 2021



## **Farm Bill Programs**

NRCS's natural resource conservation programs offer agricultural producers and non-industrial private forest landowners both financial and technical assistance to voluntarily conserve natural resources on privately-owned farm and ranch lands. The following is a summary of the various conservation programs funded through the 2014 Farm Bill and other federal programs:

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

### **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

Assistance for broad spectrum of conservation practices that promote agricultural production, forest management and environmental quality.

### **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**

Encourages producers to embrace long-term comprehensive conservation by maintaining and improving existing practices to address priority resource concerns

### **Agriculture Management Assistance (AMA) Program**

Helps agricultural producers use conservation to manage risk and solve natural resource issues through natural resources conservation.

## **EASEMENTS**

### **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)**

Provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits.

### **Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)**

NRCS helps Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land.

### **Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)**

NRCS helps to restore, protect and enhance enrolled wetlands, which provide habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species, and improve water quality

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Regional Conservation Partnership**

**Program (RCP)** Promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners, through contracts and agreements, to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners.

## **WATERSHEDS/COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**

**Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP)** Undertakes emergency measures on watersheds damaged by fire, flood, and other natural disasters to prevent erosion and runoff that could endanger lives and property.

### **Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO)**

Program Provides technical and financial assistance to entities of State and local governments and Tribes (project sponsors) for planning and installing watershed projects.

### **Watershed Surveys and Planning**

Assists Federal, State, and local agencies and tribal governments to protect watersheds from damage caused by erosion, floodwater, and sediment and to conserve and develop water and land resources.

### **Watershed Rehabilitation**

Local communities, with NRCS assistance, have constructed over 11,800 dams in 47 states since 1948. Many of these dams are nearing the end of their 50-year design life. Rehabilitation of these dams is needed to address critical public health and safety issues in these communities.

## **MORE INFORMATION**

For more information, contact the local USDA NRCS office serving your county.

Your USDA Service Center can be obtained on the NRCS website at: [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)

The garden collects rainwater, giving it a chance to "strain" out impurities before draining into the aquifer. They work best when they're placed at the bottom of downspouts or naturally low spots in the landscape, usually where water tends to puddle. They're especially useful for collecting runoff from paved surfaces. Rain gardens can be any size or shape and can attract thirsty wildlife. When selecting plants, you'll need to consider how much sun your site gets and how much space is available. Make sure you select plants that are not just water-tolerant, but also drought-tolerant for the times between rains.

### Plants for Your Rain Garden

Rain gardens rely on plants that will survive dry spells but then soak up excess stormwater during Florida's rainy months, preventing the water from running across your landscape. Include different types of plants in your rain garden to create a complete and cohesive look that will provide year-round interest.

Good flowering plants for rain gardens are blue flag iris, goldenrod, swamp sunflower, spider lily, and milkweed. Many of these are native and will attract butterflies and other wildlife. Appropriate ornamental grasses include Florida gamma grass (also called fakahatchee), muhly grass, and wiregrass. For shrubs, try Virginia willow, buttonbush, or wax myrtle.

Link to Article:

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/design/types-of-gardens/rain-gardens.html>

### More from UF/IFAS (links)

Florida Field Guide to Low Impact Development: Rain Gardens (PDF)

*Itea virginica* (Virginia willow)

Rain Gardens: A Manual for Central Florida Residents (PDF; large)

Wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*)\

### Also on Gardening Solutions:

Blue Flag Iris

Cannas

Carnivorous Plants

Fakahatchee

Milkweed

Muhly Grass

Saltbush

Spider Lily

Swamp Lily

Swamp Sunflower

Wax Myrtle

(All are linked)



This rain garden on the UF campus has a dry "river bed" coursing through it that will also collect water. See more of the garden on our Flickr site.

# Simple Steps to SAVE WATER

# INDOORS



## COLOR YOUR WATER

Detect a leaking toilet by adding a few drops of food coloring to the tank. If the tank is leaking, color will appear in the bowl within 30 minutes. Replace the bad parts or consider upgrading to water-efficient toilets.

## CHECK YOUR WATER METER

Check for leaking pipes by reading your meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the readings are different, you have a leak.



## LOAD IT UP

Set clothes washing machines that have variable settings for water volume at the minimum amount required per load. If load size cannot be set, operate the washer with full loads only.



## TIME YOUR SHOWERS

By timing your showers to keep them under five minutes and installing low-flow shower heads, you can save water.



## TURN IT OFF

Turn off the water while brushing your teeth or shaving.

Source: South Florida Water Management District

# Think Before You Flush

Flush **ONLY** toilet paper and human waste.



• Toilet paper is designed to disintegrate in water.

### • **DON'T FLUSH**

- ✗ napkins
- ✗ wipes
- ✗ paper towels
- ✗ cotton balls
- ✗ "Flushable" wipes

These items can cause pipe blockages in septic systems and central sewer facilities, potentially causing sewage backups in your home and the need for costly repairs.

# Mulch vs. No Mulch

## Moisture Retention and Yields



**Use a light mulch.** Adding mulch to your garden will keep the soil protected from direct sun exposure and, as a result, allow the soil to stay moist for longer. You can use many different forms of mulch, but you'll probably have the best results with a light-colored mulch, such as dried grass clippings, because it'll reflect the sunlight. Use bark mulch around your shrubs. Wood mulch is great because it will shade the soil from the sun and break down over time, adding compost to your soil

<https://hariththarang.com/>

## 12 Best Dog Parks, Dog-Friendly Beaches, and Off-Leash Areas in Tampa, FL:

from Tampa Magazines.com

1. [Al Lopez Dog Park](#) (Jim Urbanski Dog Park)
2. [Queenie's Dog Park at Water Works Park](#)
3. [Curtis Hixon Waterfront Dog Park](#)
4. [Rowlett Dog Park](#)
5. [Ballast Point Park](#)
6. [Julian B Lane Riverfront Park Dog Park](#)
7. [Deputy Kotfila Memorial Dog Park](#)
8. [Madison Street Dog Park](#)
9. [Fort De Soto Dog Park & Beach](#)
10. [Logan Gate Dog Park](#)
11. [West Dog Park](#)
12. [Picnic Island Beach Dog Park](#)



photo from Joe A of AL Lopez Dog Park

Link to article: <https://tampamagazines.com/10-of-the-top-dog-parks-in-tampa/>

## Announcement from the HSWCD Board

The Board of Supervisors in accordance with Executive Director Dr. Joe Walsh has decided not to participate in any student speech or poster contest for the remainder of 2024. There is a state-wide performance review of all Soil and Water Districts. The Board of Supervisors in agreement with Executive Director Dr. Joe Walsh will be using the performance review to evaluate the agencies priorities, restructure and develop its business plans for 2025.

# Why We Need to Protect Our Watersheds?

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-priorities/protect-water-and-land/land-and-water-stories/how-we-protect-watersheds/>

Earth is covered in 70% water and unfortunately 40-50% of our nation's waters are impaired or threatened.

"Impaired" means that the water body does not support one or more of its intended uses. This could mean that the water is not suitable to drink, swim in or to consume the fish that was caught there. The leading causes of pollution in our waterways are sediments, bacteria (such as E. coli) and excess nutrients (such as nitrogen and phosphorus).

Although nutrients sound like things that belong in a healthy environment, they can cause big problems in a poorly managed watershed. For instance, sediment can suffocate fish by clogging their gills and the presence of bacteria alone can indicate that other viruses and germs can be found in the water as well. Erosion, runoff of animal waste and overflowing of combined sewers are just a few ways these pollutants reach our waters.

## What You Can do to Help?

The EPA offers their tips on how you can help keep your watershed clean and healthy.

- Conserve water every day. Take shorter showers, fix leaks & turn off the water when not in use.
- Don't pour toxic household chemicals down the drain; take them to a hazardous waste center.
- Use hardy plants that require little or no watering, fertilizers or pesticides in your yard.
- Do not over apply fertilizers. Consider using organic or slow release fertilizers instead.
- Recycle yard waste in a compost pile & use a mulching mower.
- Use surfaces like wood, brick or gravel for decks & walkways, which allows rain to soak in and not run off.
- Never pour used oil or antifreeze into the storm drain or the street.
- Pick up after your dog, and dispose of the waste in the toilet or the trash.
- Drive less—walk or bike; many pollutants in our waters come from car exhaust and car leaks.

## Conservation Quiz Corner

Are you smarter than an Envirothon 5th grader?



Answer the following to find out!

1. Moles are considered \_\_\_\_\_, meaning they are physically adapted for burrowing.
2. What is the largest river that is entirely in the US that drains to the Atlantic Ocean?
3. What do you call the study of tree diseases?
4. More than half of our breathable oxygen comes from the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. What federal law was designed to protect critically imperiled species from extinction?

Conservation Quiz Corner Answers: (1) fossorial (2) Susquehanna River (3) forest pathology (4) ocean (plankton in the ocean) (5) Endangered Species Act of 1973



quiz by yorkccd.org

## Contact Us:

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