

BLUEPRINTS /// Design ideas and inspiration

Storm Catcher

A rain garden provides a runoff solution for Texas property battling extreme weather – from drought to downpours. BY TOM CRAIN

When your client is the sustainability volunteer coordinator for the city of Plano, Texas, with a vast knowledge and passion for “green” landscape concepts and ideas, selling a rain garden project to her isn’t as big of a challenge as one might think.


“It was a dream project come true,” explains Carrie Dubberley, president of Dubberley Landscape. “I did not have to spend any time educating or convincing this client to build a rain garden as a solution to her landscaping issues, which is often the case.”

One of the main reasons for the installation was to manage her client’s property storm water runoff. North Texas is known for weather extremes, alternating between periods of severe drought followed by excessive downpours.

During typical summer downpours, her client’s neighbor’s roof downspout carried excessive rainwater off the roof directly into her client’s yard, resulting in a major area of standing water that pooled on both sides of the property line. Depending upon the amount of rainfall, it could often take weeks to drain, causing foundation cracks and costly repairs.

To alleviate the problem of pooling water, Dubberley installed a French drain to conduct storm water away from both her client’s and client’s neighbor’s roofs into the rain garden system. For the rain garden build-out itself, Dubberley removed up to half of her client’s lawn, replacing it with native and well-adapted plants and shredded hardwood mulch. She excavated the clay (which is

the typical soil type for North Texas), later using it as a fill material to create a berm on the lower side of the rain garden featuring moss boulders and flowering thyme. In the back yard, she installed a rain barrel to collect water for her client’s vegetable garden.

“So far, the rain garden works like a charm,” says Dubberley. “Although we haven’t had any excessive rains yet which will provide a true test for the new garden (North Texas is in its third year of major drought and the garden was installed last summer), the moderate rainwater that has fallen, has percolated through the system rather quickly resulting in no standing water.” 

The author is a freelance writer based in Akron, Ohio. See how Dubberley Landscape makes rain gardens profitable in “Route H₂O” on page 80.

DESIGN DETAILS

Company name: Dubberley Landscape

Headquarters: Plano, Texas

President: Carrie Roschlau Dubberley

Web site: www.dubberleylandscape.com

Client/service mix: 98% residential, 2% commercial

Number of employees: 2

Initial project estimate: \$8,000

Final project cost: \$5,324

Total project land area: 1,507 square feet

Total rain garden area: 200 square feet

Total design hours: 16 (project management time not included)

Total labor hours: 84

Subcontracted services: 5 laborers for installation

Key plant species: Texas Star Hibiscus, inland sea oats, Louisiana Iris, cardinal flower, rain lilies, columbine, obedient plant, thyme

Key hardscape materials: French drain, downspout drain adaptor parts, 4-inch PVC pipes, popup emitter, overflow drain, flagstone, moss boulders, rain barrel, compost and clay killer, shredded hardwood mulch

Key equipment: sod cutter, rototiller