Greening the Arboretum

What is a rain garden?
A rain garden captures water that runs off hard surfaces into a shallow, bowl-shaped area landscaped with native plantings. The garden prevents runoff from entering and polluting a nearby stream that feeds the Choptank River and the Chesapeake Bay. The water nourishes the plants as it soaks slowly into the ground. The Arboretum rain garden also collects excess irrigation water that is piped directly to the garden.

What about mosquitoes?
Rain gardens are designed to avoid floodwater where mosquitoes collect. A well-designed rain garden with a proper berm less than 18 inches of water will not become a flood event. Mosquitoes are more likely to breed in small ponds or standing water. Rain barrels include a screen that prevents mosquito eggs from entering and laying eggs inside.

NATIVE PLANTS
Native plants such as river birch (Betula nigra), black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta), and switchgrass (Panicum virgatum) are planted in these gardens to hold the soil, absorb water, and provide food and habitat for pollinators and beneficial wildlife. Native plants are used because they have adapted to local soil and climate, have natural defenses against many pests and diseases, and grow with little use of water, fertilizer, and pesticides.

RAIN BARRELS
Rain barrels located under downspouts collect rainwater and store it for use in the garden. Even a brief summer shower can fill a rain barrel.

CREATE YOUR OWN RAIN GARDEN
Rain gardens are valuable additions to residential landscapes. If you have a low spot where water drains from a roof, driveway, or other hard surfaces, it could be converted into a rain garden. Factors to consider include location away from structures, soil type, and absence of tree roots.

LEARN MORE ABOUT IT
You can see the design and planting list for this rain garden at www.adkinsarboretum.org. Other helpful resources to learn more about rain gardens and how to design, install, and maintain them: www.rainscapes.org and www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Content/DEP/Rainscapes/home.html.