



# Plants for Wet Conditions



## What is poor drainage and why does it occur?

Standing water displaces air in the soil and smothers plant roots. Symptoms on the leaves and shoots include wilting, browning of leaves (scorch), poor color, and stunted growth. Poor drainage often occurs in disturbed sites when heavy clay is compacted by construction machinery. Beds cultivated for planting collect water running off the compacted ground. Wet areas may also occur by swales, drain spout run off, and low areas even when the soil percolation is adequate in most of the site.

To check for a potential drainage problem, dig a hole at least 2 feet deep, fill with water, and note how long the water remains. If it doesn't drain away in 24 hours, a drainage problem exists.

## Wet Tolerant Plants

These plants are adapted for conditions that stay wet for longer periods of time, such as wetlands or bogs. Please note that many plants on this list can tolerate wet conditions, but may have issues with their roots being submerged long-term. The most wet-tolerant plants are marked with an asterisk (\*).

### Wet Tolerant Perennials

Asters  
Astilbe  
Blazing Star (*Liatris*)  
Blue-Eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium*)  
Blue Flag Iris  
Blue Lobelia  
Bee Balm (*Monarda*)  
Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia*)\*  
Cinnamon Fern\*  
False Indigo (*Baptisia*)  
Joe-Pye Weed (*Eupatorium*)  
Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus*)\*  
Royal Fern\*  
Sedge (*Carex*)  
Sneezeweed (*Helenium*)\*  
Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias*)\*  
Turtlehead (*Chelone*)\*

### Wet Tolerant Trees & Shrubs:

Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)\*  
Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)  
River Birch (*Betula nigra*)\*  
Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)  
Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)\*  
Willow Oak (*Quercus phellos*)  
Willow (*Salix*)\*  
Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)  
Serviceberry (*Amerlanchier canadensis*)  
American Holly (*Ilex opaca*)  
Pyramidal Arborvitae  
Summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*)  
Twig Dogwood  
Enkianthus (*Enkianthus campanulatus*)  
Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)  
Virginia Sweetspire (*Itea virginica*)  
Bayberry (*Myrica pennsylvanica*)  
Pussy Willow (*Salix*)  
Viburnums

## How can I solve my drainage issue?

You have a few options for solving your drainage issues. You can catch and divert the water that collect in that area, such as moving a downspout to a different area or adding a rain barrel. Just be warned that diverted water still needs to go somewhere--whether that's another part of your property or to a neighbors'. You can also mound up a bed or add a raised garden that has amended soil to raise the roots above the area that collects with water.

Planting wet tolerant plants can both be a way to work around your drainage issue and solve it. Plants that thrive in these wet areas can also soak up the water with their roots or slow rainfall with their leaves.