

How to Do a Simple Infiltration Test



This is also known as a percolation or “perc” test. Rain gardens should only be built in areas where soils drain within 24 hours, so test the ability of the soil to infiltrate water (allow it to soak in and drain through the soil) by following these steps:

- a. Using a shovel or a post hole digger, dig a 12-inch deep hole.
- b. Fill the hole with water and allow it to drain completely (NOTE: if the hole fills with water on its own or if water is still in the hole after 24 hours, choose a new location).
- c. Fill the hole with water a second time and do one of the following:
 - Place a ruler or yard stick in the hole. Note the water level and time. After 15 minutes, check the water level again and note the new water level. Multiply the change in water level by four to get the number of inches of infiltration in an hour. A rate of at least 1/2-inch of water per hour is appropriate for an infiltration practice like a rain garden.

OR

- Cover the hole for safety and check back 24 hours later. If the water has completely drained, this indicates the soil is appropriate for an infiltration practice like a rain garden.