

The following are some general definitions of conservation practices to help guide your application to the Urban Farms Mini-Grant Program.

Rainwater catchment - Rain barrels and cisterns can be installed to capture stormwater runoff from rooftops or other structures to store for later use. This helps minimize sediment laden runoff from negatively impacting waterways and creates a source of water for later use on-site. Rainwater catchment systems can be costly to install so it is important to consider whether you will be drawing from a sufficiently large roof area and whether they will work well for your site. [For further design considerations click here.](#)

Rain garden - "Rain gardens are planted areas designed to capture and treat rainwater that runs off roof and paved surfaces. Runoff is directed towards a depression in the ground, planted with flood and drought resistant plants. As the water nourishes the plants, the garden stores, evaporates and infiltrates rainwater into the soil. The soil absorbs runoff pollutants, which are broken down over time by microorganisms and plant roots." - Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association

Filter Strip - Like a rain garden, a filter strip is a planted strip or area at the edge of a road, field or other high-use area, designed to filter contaminants and sediment from run-off before it enters adjacent waterways. Filter strips are normally wide and fairly flat or gently sloping, well suited to managing sheet flows off adjacent surfaces.

Bioswale: Bioswales often take the form of vegetated depressions or ditches designed to capture stormwater, allowing sediment and contaminants to filter out. In the case of higher flows, a bioswale will slow the flow enough for contaminants to filter and some water to infiltrate before emptying into a stormdrain or waterway. For farm or garden sites on a slope, a series of swales and berms, or terraces, may be used to help retain water, soil and nutrients on site for use by plantings.

Straw wattle: A straw wattle is a man-made tube of compressed, weed-free straw that is placed on a hill, construction site, or around a storm drain to filter run-off. Straw bales, silt fence or matting, and other materials may also be used in a similar way.

Hedgerow - Lines or groups of trees, shrubs, forbs or perennial grasses planted along field borders to provide habitat, cover or pollination or to act as a living screen for dust and noise. [Click here for NRCS definition](#) and here for a report from the California Association of Family Farmer's on [how to plan and build and hedgerow](#).

Cover crop - cover crop is a crop grown specifically for conservation and improvement of soil, including nutrient cycling, managing soil moisture, preventing erosion and increasing soil organic matter. Weed suppression and enhancing biodiversity are additional potential benefits. Cover crops can be annual or perennial and are often grown during the winter when a cash crop is not being cultivated or can be grown in the alleyways between orchards or permanent crops. [Click here](#) for a chart of cover crop options and different selection criteria.

Mulching: Mulching is the process of applying plant residue or other suitable materials to the soil to prevent erosion, conserve moisture, suppress weeds, and improve soil quality amongst other benefits.