Preschool Activity Outline

Please note, this plan is made for a cloudy/slightly rainy day, outside. It could be easily modified for a sunny day, but being outside is important. These plans are created to be used at a site with a rain garden, but another sort of garden or even pots for plants could be used.

Set up: Have two or three plants ready to plant as a group. Have a large container of water and something smaller, which the children can use to pour water out of, filled and ready before the children arrive. Have several surfaces to pour the water onto during observations, options could include sidewalk, grass, packed dirt, and a garden.

This plan begins after gathering children together outside. It starts off structured, but what to say during discussions is not laid out st will work best when the children are contributing at least as much as the activity leader. Ideally the activity leader will have enough knowledge about stormwater runoff and rain gardens to be able to direct the childrens' questions in productive ways.

Here is some basic background for the activity leader, much more can be found at https://sites.google.com/view/stormwater-and-rain-gardens/ where these activity plans are published.

Stormwater runoff is created when rainwater runs off of surfaces such as roofs, driveways, and roads instead of soaking into the ground. One reason this is a problem is because the stormwater can wash pollutants into water bodies

Rain gardens are gardens planted in shallow depressions in the soil designed to capture and filter stormwater runoff. Typically, rain gardens contain native plants which also increases habitat for pollinators and other living things.

Outdoors- bring children together to form a circle. Observe the weather and sky. “It is rainy today. Let us say some rainy-day rhymes together.”Sing “Rain on the Green Grass” using hands and fingers to correspond with body parts. Repeat 5x and as requested. Demonstrate gestures along with corresponding word to support vocabulary and gestures together.

Rain on the green grass (wiggle fingers down to floor and spread out wide)
Rain on the trees (wiggle fingers up and over the head)
Rain on the housetop (make an inverted “V” over the top of head with hands)
But NOT on me! (arms over head to make an umbrella)

Science Experiment and Observation: Have a large container of water and a smaller container filled with some water. Invite children to gather around a surface, i.e., packed soil. Pour water from the small container onto a packed surface and observe. Activity leader encourages children to describe what they see and shares knowledge about storm water and rain gardens and the importance of water for these areas. Repeat activity with other surfaces, such as grass, sidewalk/cement and gardens then share observations. Ask which surface is best for plants and soil? Which surface does the water soak into fastest? Encourage sharing and listening to each other’s comments. May also begin with “I wonder why….”. Repeat as necessary.
Help children observe that the rain soaks best into garden areas. Move activity to child’s interest areas?
Optionally have two or more small containers for water so that multiple children can participate at once.

Sing another nursery rhyme corresponding to the theme of rain - Doctor Foster went to Gloucester All In A Shower of Rain. Using all body parts beginning from the ankle to top of head, recite verse. Cross chest with arms and shake head left and right for “no” while speaking “And said, I’ll never go back there again!” As water rises, words are mumbled as if underwater.

“Doctor Foster went to Gloucester,
All in a shower of rain.
He stepped in a puddle,
right up to his ankles,
And said, “I’ll never go back there again!”.

Talk about how water forms puddles, streams, lakes, and rivers. Ask if they’ve ever seen water wash something away. Explain that a rain garden catches water and the things that are in it so they don't flow into rivers and lakes where

they don’t belong. If children are curious how the rain garden helps, remind them how the water soaked into the garden and not the cement and explain that when the water soaks into the ground it can’t wash things away

Explain that today children will help plant flowers for the rain garden (Or other garden or in pots).
Rain garden visit - children in groups of two to three plant flowers with activity leader. (Others can play or continue with investigation). Demonstrate how to plant a deep hole, and explain parts of the plant – roots, stem, leaves. Gently pack soil and water the plant. Notice the removal of rocks and sod and access soil/dirt. Foster children’s curiosity.

Move back into a circle (If there is a deck or other wooden surface gather there for this clapping rainstorm).

Clapping rainstorm.
Say: we are going to make a rainstorm. Everybody copy me and do what I do.
Sometimes it rains very gently and we can't hear it at all (flutter fingers lightly as if rain is falling gently down.)
And then it starts raining a little bit harder (rub hands together)
Then it rains harder and louder (Start clapping)
And then sometimes it thunders very loudly! (Stomp feet while continuing to clap hands)
(You may need to remind children that we are making this rainstorm as loud as we can without using our voices)
Go through the steps in reverse to show the storm passing

After other activities, if time permits, allow the children to continue experimenting with water if they would like. Encourage questions.