

Dressing up a drainage swale

Plant a modified "rock garden" in a swale that rarely has rushing water and is intermittently wet and dry. Plants with strong roots and sturdy stems work best. Large stones at random intervals look most natural.



Stone is the best material for rushing water. Line the swale with landscape fabric, fill it with inexpensive gravel or crushed concrete and top it off with a few inches of attractive stone. Place larger stones along the sides to hold soil in place.



Plant ground cover or grass inside a swale that's subject to occasional rushing water. These plants will stand up to the water's force better than some taller ones. Then, for a natural look, line the edges with tough plants, such as ferns, Siberian irises and hostas.



Tough Plants for Drainage Swales

Name	Zones	Height/ Width	Comments
Daylily <i>Hemerocallis</i> spp.	3 to 9	1-5 ft./ 1-3 ft.	Sun to part shade; tolerates occasional running water
Hosta <i>Hosta</i> spp.	3 to 9	6 in.-4 ft./ 1-5 ft.	Part shade to shade; moist, well-drained soil
Siberian iris <i>Iris sibirica</i>	4 to 9	2-4 ft./ indefinite	Full sun to part shade; tolerates occasional rushing water
Pink coreopsis <i>Coreopsis rosea</i>	3 to 9	1-2 ft./ 1-2 ft.	Full sun; tolerates wet or dry soil
Christmas fern <i>Polystichum acrostichoides</i>	3 to 9	2-3 ft./ 2-3 ft.	Part shade; moist, well-drained soil
Creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i> 'Flore Pleno'	3 to 8	18-24 in./ indefinite	Sun to part shade; moist soil; spreads rapidly
Melampodium <i>Melampodium paludosum</i>	Annual	10-24 in./ 10-24 in.	Full sun to part shade; tolerates dry or wet conditions
Lilyturf <i>Liriope spicata</i>	5 to 10	12 in./ 8-12 in.	Full shade to full sun; well-drained soil; fleshy roots hold soil well
Summersweet <i>Clethra alnifolia</i>	4 to 9	8 ft./ 8 ft.	Shrub for part shade; moist or dry soil
Virginia sweetspire <i>Itea virginica</i>	5 to 9	3-5 ft./ 4-6 ft.	Shrub for full sun or shade; moist or dry soil