

Dry Out Waterlogged Areas With A French Drain

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Water may be the key to life but when it's soaking your basement or creating a bog in your yard, you probably wish you had a little less of it. When water is accumulating where you don't want it, French drains are a good solution to move it to a safer place. A French drain is simply a trench that is filled with gravel and a perforated pipe then backfilled so that it matches the surrounding area. Some people may use only gravel or sand in the trench but French drains work much more efficiently when a pipe is included.

Water travels along the path of least resistance and a French drain is much more porous than the surrounding soil so it creates a freeway of flowing water away from the problem area. Some French drain uses include moving water away from foundations, relieving water pressure from retaining walls, and dispersing water that has accumulated from neighboring land that has a higher elevation.

The gravel in the French drains make it easy for the water to pass through. The perforated pipe permits easy passage but also provides a small storage place for the water underground and the perforations allow the water to disperse along the length of the pipe. Some pipes have round perforations while others have slits, which tend to get clogged less with small sand and debris. You can also use either fabric or straw to cover the pipe to reduce clogging but depending on your soil, that is not always necessary and sometimes the fabric can cause clogging too. Contact a professional about fixing drainage problems.

Your trench lines should be carefully planned and sloped correctly so that water does not gather anywhere in mid line or cause damage to surrounding areas. Map out any hazards before digging, such as cable, power, or gas lines. You may need to call your utility companies to come out and verify the location of their lines. In most cases, they'll do it for free.

Digging is where you'll work the hardest but you can use power machines to help. The depth of the trench depends on the use of the drain and where you are running the water to. Pick a safe spot for the water disperse, away from anywhere it can do harm. Types of areas where you might run the water include an open field that can absorb the runoff, a garden area that has enough plants to handle the extra water, or a dry well that disperses the water further underground. Wherever you pick make sure you never transfer your problem to your neighbor's land.

French drains can be a simple and effective solution but be careful in their installation. Too close to a building, or retaining wall, can affect how it settles and its foundation's integrity. It's also important to backfill correctly, making sure the trench is compacted sufficiently so that you don't have problems with it settling lower than its surrounding area.

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