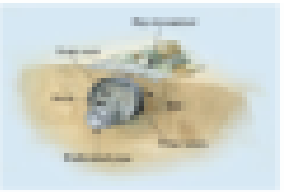
French Drains

A French drain is a trench filled with gravel or rock, with or without a perforated pipe, used to redirect surface water and groundwater. This practice is a common means of diverting water from one location (ex. near a foundation or a wet area on a property) to another location (ex. municipal (City) storm drain or a nearby swale). A French drain diverts excess rainwater to dry soil that is excessively waterlogged.

What is a French Drain?

An exterior French drain is a trench 6 inches to a few feet in diameter dug along a declined slope on a property. It is covered over with gravel to prevent excess mud and debris from entering the trench and to prevent soil erosion on the inside. Perforated piping may be laid underneath the gravel to accelerate the movement of water through the trench. Gutter downspouts from a home's roof may empty directly into a French drain system to alleviate flooding due to excess rainfall.



Advantages of French Drains

- French drains provide an effective way to channel water away from a home to prevent water damage.
- Waterlogged lawns can be transformed and rendered useful for gardens or children's play areas.
- French drains are relatively inexpensive to install, particularly if they do not require excavation of exterior structures, such as walkways and decks.
- Installing a French drain does not necessarily require special tools or heavy equipment.

Disadvantages of French Drains

- Installing a French drain can be dangerous if there are utilities buried in the vicinity. Always call 811 before you dig!
- Digging may disturb natural water flows and can lead to pooling of water. It is important to understand water flow on your site.
- Installing a French drain may require the removal of existing structures, such as decks and walkways, especially if using a backhoe to dig the trench.
- Clogged French drains may overflow without warning and cause damage to yards and basements.
- Exterior French drains installed without a sump pump rely on gravity to direct water flow. An adequate slope for gravity drainage may be difficult to establish for properties located at the bottom of a steep slope.