

CENTRAL OHIO RAIN GARDEN INITIATIVE

THE RAIN GARDENER



1st Quarter 2010
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www.centralohioraingardens.org

A Note from the Chair

By Stephanie Suter

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Central Ohio Rain Garden Initiative's quarterly newsletter!

The Central Ohio Rain Garden Initiative (CORGI) was formed in October 2007 as a collaboration of government agencies, consultants, municipalities, watershed groups, and community organizations. Our mission is to promote the benefits of rain gardens for clean water and community beautification. Our over-arching goal is to have enough rain gardens implemented in central Ohio to collect 1 billion gallons of storm water per year. As of this first publication, we have reached 71 rain gardens collecting 3.6 million gallons per year, so we still have a lot of work to do!

Our hope is to inspire you, your co-workers, your family, and your friends to promote the installations of rain gardens to help us meet our goal. We aspire to

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assist readers with information on rain gardens, make connections with other rain garden enthusiasts, and to create new partnerships. Each issue will have recurring sections that include: a calendar and upcoming events, a guest columnist, seasonal planning tips, a featured garden or project, a featured plant, and a section to answer YOUR questions.

Enjoy this first issue, and please keep up the great gardening!

2010 First Quarter Calendar of Events

January

Mid-January: Franklin Soil & Water Annual Spring Plant Sale

Franklin Soil & Water will offer native trees, shrubs, wildflowers, seeds, and rain garden kits during their annual sale. Pre-order plants at www.franklinswcd.org starting in mid-January. Plants will be available for pick up in April, and the rain garden kits will be available for pick up in May.

January 26, 2 PM: CORGI Steering Committee meeting at the Franklin Soil & Water office

Jan. 24-27: OSU Nursery Short Courses & CENTS (Central Environmental Nursery Trade Show) at the Greater Columbus Convention Center

This conference has many courses, workshops, exhibitors, continuing education credits, and certification testings. This year, there is a rain garden track featured! Register at www.onla.org.

February - March

Feb. 27 – Mar. 7: Central Ohio Home & Garden Show at the Ohio Expo Center (Ohio State Fairgrounds)

This year's show will feature resources of perennials, landscaping materials, & garden supplies.

Our Sister Initiative in the Northwest

*By Katie Swartz, Chair of the Toledo–Lucas
County Rain Garden Initiative*

The Rain Garden Initiative of Toledo–Lucas County is excited to be moving into its fourth active year. What started as an outreach and education campaign to educate municipal officials, engineers, and the general public on rain gardens has now taken on other low impact development practices such as rain barrels, bioswales, permeable pavement, and green roofs. This year we partnered with U.S. EPA to host a Managing Wet Weather with Green Infrastructure Workshop and local tour of green infrastructure practices on November 5th and 6th.

Over the past few years, we've helped companies, organizations, and homeowners install forty rain



Rain Garden at the Toledo Zoo

gardens, sold nearly five-hundred rain barrels, hosted numerous workshops and provided information to nearly 60,000 people at over 100 events in the region. Needless to say, our work is not over!

We have enjoyed our exchange with CORGI and continue to look for ways we can collaborate.

Please check out our website at www.raingardeninitiative.org or “Friend” us on Facebook!

Featured Rain Garden/Project

By Judy Sargeant & Janet Laster

A 2007 Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District (FSWCD) rain garden workshop inspired the 16 members of the Annehurst Village Garden Club to propose a rain garden at Annehurst Elementary School, where heavy rainfall left standing water in the front traffic circle. With support of the school principal and the Westerville City Schools Grounds Team, a community partnership was established for a 500 sq. ft. garden.

The Grounds Team excavated and prepared the garden site. The Annehurst Garden Club, Westerville Parks Foundation, Sunrise Rotary Club and Westerville Kiwanis Club provided funding. FSWCD staff provided design and plant selection expertise, a rain garden school assembly, and a hands-on demonstration of drainage during the two planting days. Scioto Gardens Nursery provided and discounted the native plants. Teams of the school's 360 K-5 students and garden club members planted the garden in October 2008. Many students had never used a shovel or held a plant!

*“Most importantly, approximately
50,000 gallons of water were
recycled through the garden!”*

One student enthused, “I love to dig,” and didn't want to stop.

Through its first year, first graders visited the garden and journaled their observations. Fourth grade science students winterized the garden. Students and teachers are so enthusiastic that garden club members organized a “Lunch Bunch Garden Club” and will partner with students and Franklin Soil and Water to build a second rain garden in September 2010. Most importantly, approximately 50,000 gallons of water were recycled through the garden!

For more information contact Judy Sargeant at judysarge@wowway.com or Janet Laster at laster.1@osu.edu.



*Leslie, garden club member, with
Annehurst kids planting in the rain garden*

Featured Plant – Cardinal Flower



This quarter's featured rain garden plant is the cardinal flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*. Cardinal flower is native to Ohio and has delicate red flowers that attract a variety of pollinators, including hummingbirds.

Cardinal flower prefers moist to wet, well-drained soils. Many times this wildflower is "advertised" as liking full sun, but that's only if the moisture is constant. Cardinal flower is well-suited to a partly shaded rain garden.

The bright pop of red stands out brilliantly in the summer months. The bloom time of this flower is August to September. It can vary in height

between 2' and 4'. Cardinal flower grows in a tall spike, and can be planted anywhere from 8"-24" apart. They look great when spaced close together. They will establish a long, extensive root system.

Basal rosettes of the plant should receive sunlight in the winter, so be sure to remove fallen leaves.

Plants that complement cardinal flower include irises, wild quinine, marsh milkweed, culver's root, great blue lobelia, asters, blazingstar, coneflowers, and foxglove beardtongue.

Ask CORGI!

(Graphic from <http://avatars.yahoo.com>)

In this section of the newsletter, we would like to answer YOUR questions! Please submit questions by going to our website www.centralohioraingardens.org and selecting "Contact Us." You can fill in your question in the on-line form. Below are some common questions that we receive and their answers.

1. Where can I get money for my rain garden project?

Great question! One great aspect of rain gardens is that you don't have to spend a lot of money to install it correctly and have it look fantastic, however, if you've already tried getting mulch and plants donated or transplanted, some grants can help cover the costs. Most rain gardens can be installed for anywhere from \$2-\$12 per square foot, especially if you do the digging and planning yourself. If you are a resident of the Cities of Westerville or Hilliard or the Village of Canal Winchester and want to install a rain garden on a residential property, there are cost-share grants available through Franklin Soil & Water (614-486-9613). Private grants for projects can also be sought, and the Columbus Foundation is a good place to start. Sometimes educational or community grants can be obtained through Ohio EPA or even WalMart. Also, try checking to see if your community or local garden club has a foundation.

2. My yard has a wet spot. Is this a good place for a rain garden?

Sometimes the wet spots in our yards are caused by poor drainage of the soil, a broken tile, a spring, or just excess water entering the area. If you are unsure of the cause, definitely don't attempt to direct more storm water to an area like this. We don't want to cause more of a problem. Plants that are used in rain gardens can sometimes be pretty good at helping out a situation like this, though. The long, extensive root systems can help soak up water in an unsightly, wet spot, so planting trees, shrubs, and perennials can help, provided there are no underground utilities. Directing rooftop runoff to an area that already has issues draining water is not recommended.

3. Which local nurseries carry plants (native & non-native) for rain gardens?

There is an assortment of nurseries in Central Ohio that all carry native plants. Some carry more native options than others, but you can usually find a good selection from most of them. Check out our website's Resource page under Links to obtain a list of local nurseries for residential landowners. Speak with the staff at those nurseries to find out more specific information about the plants you are purchasing to be sure to plant the "Right Plant in the Right Place"!

Rain Garden Planning – During the Winter

Thinking about brighter days ahead? Planning for an upcoming rain garden for your own yard or for a project can help bring ideas to mind of brilliant colors, butterflies, hummingbirds, and answering the question of what to do with your excess rain water!

The first thing to do when planning your garden is to select the right spot for your garden. You should also include the other interested parties at this stage if you're planning a group project. The best spot for a rain garden includes several considerations: close proximity to downspouts or source of storm water runoff, but 10-20 feet away from the building's foundation; perhaps visible location if on a public property or if you'd like to show it off; avoid placing it under large trees or where established root systems already exist; and definitely away from any underground utilities (remember to call OUPS before you dig!).

Winter and early spring are great times to begin thinking of your planting list as well. When creating your planting list, consider using native plants, as they are acclimated to our soils, climate, and pollinators.

Cultivars of natives are certainly appropriate, and they offer the benefits of natives while keeping the plant a little more tame, depending on the plant. Your rain garden can include plants that bloom for most of the year, so choose plants that will give you the most amount of color for your enjoyment and the pollinators'. Playing with textures and heights of plants can bring style and optimum viewing enjoyment. If you would like to attract hummingbirds to your garden, consider using plants like cardinal flower, penstemon, bee balm, phlox, and columbine. A shrub in a rain garden can provide a focal point of the garden and winter interest. Plants in a rain garden need to be both water and drought tolerant, so be sure to research what plants will perform well in your garden.

Tip: If you already have a rain garden...

Thinking about clipping off the heads of your perennials? Think again! The seeds can be left up over the winter to provide food for native and wintering birds. Plants can be cut down in the spring to allow room for new growth.

Calculations

If you're interested in tallying up how many gallons of storm water per year your rain garden collects, follow this simple equation (from the Rain Garden Network):

1. Calculate the drainage area (square feet) of surface that will be directed into your garden.
2. Multiply the drainage area by 0.625. This will give you gallons of water from a 1" rain event.
3. Multiply that by your local precipitation (inches). In central Ohio, it is 38.5" per year.
4. This number will give you approximately how many gallons of storm water per year are collected by your rain garden.

Resources You Can Use

Central Ohio Rain Garden Initiative – www.centralohioraingardens.org
Ohio Utilities Protection Service (OUPS) – www.oups.org or (800)362-2764 or 8-1-1

Signs

A sign for a rain garden is a good idea to let your neighbors know that your garden has a purpose. CORGI sells rain garden yard signs for \$15, and you can fill in the amount of storm water collected per year on these signs. Please call (614)486-9613 if you are interested.

