

CENTRAL OHIO RAIN GARDEN INITIATIVE

THE RAIN GARDENER



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Brook Run Gardens Installed

By *Stephanie Suter, Chair*



In 2008, Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District was awarded a grant from the Ohio EPA's Ohio Environmental Education Fund on behalf of the Central Ohio Rain Garden Initiative (CORGI). As part of this educational grant, we targeted four neighborhoods for educational workshops and selected one for a neighborhood rain garden installation project. An overwhelming response was received from the residents in the Brook Run neighborhood, and the City of

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Westerville was more than accommodating to the task.

Monitoring equipment was set up in the neighborhood to gather site-specific storm water runoff flow and rainfall data. This data is being collected to find the amount of storm water that is reduced from entering our creeks and streams.

Sixteen residents signed up to be a part of the project, and site assessments... *...Continued on page 2*

2010 Third Quarter Calendar of Events

August

Aug. 10, 2pm: CORGI Steering Committee meeting; meet at picnic tables near parking lot at Inniswood Metro Gardens

This meeting's agenda will include reviewing our 2012 goal progress and setting a vision for the future. We will conclude the meeting with a short tour of the Brook Run rain gardens. Meeting open to CORGI Steering Committee members.

Aug. 28, 9-11am: Rain Garden Workshop & Installation for Grove City Residents; Gantz Park

Grove City residents are invited to attend this workshop where we'll discuss what rain gardens are, their benefits, and how to install them, as well as getting hands-on experience through a demonstration installation at the park. Residents will be able to learn from the demo rain garden and can help plant plants and mulch. Space is limited, so call 614-277-3050 today to register!

Don't forget to submit your rain garden online today!

www.centralohioraingardens.org

September

Sept. 25, 9-11am: Rain Garden Workshop & Installation for Grove City Residents; Henceroth Park

Grove City residents are invited to attend this workshop where we'll discuss what rain gardens are, their benefits, and how to install them, as well as getting hands-on experience through a demonstration installation at the park. Residents will be able to learn from the demo rain garden and can help plant plants and mulch. Space is limited, so call 614-277-3050 today to register!

Did you know?

As of this printing, there are 127 rain gardens within Franklin County boundaries. They collect 4.1 million gallons of storm water per year. At this time in 2008, there were only 23 reported rain gardens.

Great job, everyone!

Brook Run Project

...Continued from page 1

were made at each of their homes for the best placement of a rain garden, based on utility location, tree location, access to downspouts, and homeowner preference.

Designs for the rain gardens were made by CORGI members. Brook Run residents chose their preferred shape and planting plan.

The next steps for installation included: sod removal, building stone retention walls for sloped properties, building berms, tilling up the soil, adding compost, planting, and mulching. Residents will care for their rain gardens by watering this year and touching up on mulch in subsequent years.

Enthusiasm and excitement have been the main theme of this project, from the Brook Run residents to Westerville to CORGI members to people who have read or heard about it.

This project has been enhanced by the addition of a grant from the Ohio Water Development Authority received by The Ohio



State University and Franklin Soil and Water. The funding from this grant will allow for storm water runoff monitoring in a control neighborhood of very similar size and amount of impervious surface and for another monitoring site in the cul-de-sac of the neighborhood. Along with monitoring, six rain gardens will be installed in the right-of-ways in the neighborhood to collect additional storm water. Pressure transducers and lysimeter-like instruments will be included in the right-of-way gardens. Modeling and predictions lead by local data of rain garden installations should be useful for technical professionals who plan to implement future rain garden projects.

Featured Rain Garden Project

Submitted by: Kaylee Port, Union SWCD

The City of Marysville and Union SWCD teamed together to install a rain garden at one of the local parks in town. Memorial Park, home to the town's pool, paths, and an amphitheater created the perfect setting for a demonstration rain garden. As part of the City's storm water management program, the demonstration rain garden and workshop for residents aimed to get more storm water best management practices on the ground.

The rain garden was paid for by a watershed education grant from Ohio Department of Natural Resources to create educational experiences about conservation, storm water pollution and watershed stewardship. The park's amphitheater overlooks a covered stage along a walking path, a location that is highly visible and frequently visited by residents of Marysville. This stage roof has 2 downspouts that diverted water out into a grassy open area. Runoff water would flow over the grassy area into the nearby stream or stand for a few days before eventually infiltrating. The rain garden was installed to capture the runoff water from the downspouts and allow it to infiltrate, ridding the water of pollutants that had been picked up off the roof. The rain garden collects around 20,000 gallons of water per year from these downspouts. Very similar to how

a rain garden would be installed at a residence, the demonstration rain garden showed how even the average homeowner could install one.

The rain garden tied into the current landscape of hosta plants and barberry bushes. In addition to the existing plants, iris, black-eyed Susan, purple coneflower, and columbine, were added. Plants were purchased from the Marysville FFA plant sale to include high school students in the project. The students sold plants after learning how to grow, price and operate their small business. Mulch was donated from a local nursery and the Union SWCD staff spent a few days tilling, planting and mulching. A sign was also installed to educate passersby about the benefits of rain gardens.



Featured Plant – False Sunflower ‘Summer Nights’



This quarter's featured plant is 'Summer Nights' false sunflower, *Heliopsis helianthoides*. 'Summer Nights' false sunflower is a cultivar selected for its burgundy-colored centers, red-tinted darker green foliage, and dark red stems. The yellow flowers add a bold, yet delicate accent to any rain garden. The flowers attract butterflies and are a great specimen for cutting.

Plants that complement false sunflower include blazingstars, wild quinine, switchgrass, little bluestem,

irises, and bee balm. Spacing plants about 24-30" apart is suggested.

False sunflower is native to Ohio and thrives in full sun to partial shade. Although it's suitable for a rain garden, it can tolerate and even flourish in dry soil. False sunflower rises to the occasion by growing 3 to 4 feet in height.

Using cultivars of native plants in rain gardens can give us the benefits of native properties, while selecting for a variety of flower color, foliage color, and even tameness.



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. Do you give presentations for organizations? (Several submissions for this question)

Yes, we are excited to pass along educational and technical information to local organizations. Please visit our website under Contact Us, and submit a request!

2. Can I direct my sump pump into a rain garden? (Email question from Larry S.)

Maybe! The main caution is that your rain garden NOT be close to your house. If you have enough water around your home that your sump pump runs, then adding more water back into that source will just create a cycle of water going into your sump pump, then into your garden, then back to your sump pump, and so forth. So, you would need to be sure that you're pretty far from your home and home's foundation that you don't create a cycle of just running water. If your sump pump outlets at the back or sides of your property that may be a more suitable place.

3. What happens to the plants when we have a dry period? (Question asked at presentation)

Choosing the appropriate native plants, or cultivars of native plants, are essential to a successful rain garden project. Some sections of the rain garden will need plants that are water tolerant, for example where the water enters the garden, as this spot will always get extra water even in light rains. Areas that are on the back end or sides of the rain garden can have plants that are more drought tolerant. All plants will need to be able to tolerate dry times, since it doesn't rain every day, so choosing plants that have to have standing water will not work in a rain garden. The benefit of using natives or cultivars of natives is that they are used to our climate, soils, and pollinators. Even if you get the right plant for the right place, you may still need to water your rain garden if it looks thirsty, perhaps after a prolonged dry season. Research plants or ask your local nursery for guidance on a questionable plant.

4. Will a rain garden breed mosquitoes?

No. Mosquitoes need 7-10 days (some say even 10-14 days) to complete their life cycle in standing water. A rain garden should be sized to drain within 24 hours.

Rain Garden Planning – Location

Planning to install your rain garden for this upcoming fall can be enjoyable, and it will be a success with the proper planning.

Location, soils, size, and plants are the 4 most important factors of a rain garden. Placing a rain garden in an inappropriate spot can produce problems. Follow these general guidelines when picking your rain garden spot:

Do:

1. Call Ohio Utilities Protection Service (OUPS) before you dig. Underground utility locations may determine the area to put your garden.
2. Choose a fairly level site, up to 5% slope, unless you're planning on creating a small retaining wall.
3. Choose a spot that will fit your rain garden size (this may need to be chosen after you've checked your drainage area and soils for sizing).
4. Choose an area that will be able to receive storm water and where the storm water will be able to run downhill toward the garden – close to downspout, driveway, or other impervious surface. Further spots can be used for a rain garden, but it will require some more work and materials.
5. Choose an area that has overflow in mind – perhaps use the rest of your downspout that already flows out to the curb.
6. Choose an area where you and your neighbors will be able to enjoy it!
7. Plant before Oct. 1st to give plants a few weeks to be established before frosts start.

Don't, or Cautionary Tips:

1. Place your rain garden at least 10-20 feet away from the foundation of your house/building to avoid wet basement issues.
2. Avoid areas that already have standing water for more than 2 days – directing more storm water to a poorly drained area can create even more problems.
3. Watch those tree roots! Planting a rain garden requires excavation of the soil down 4-8" or even more – disturbing tree roots of established trees may cause their decline. Either don't use that spot or dig very carefully by hand.
4. Again, don't make overflow an issue. Avoid having your overflow go on to your neighbor's property or into a problem/soggy area in your yard.

Once you have your location, visit www.centralohioraingardens.org to help you plan out the rest of your garden. Click on "Garden Planning" to continue with your rain garden implementation.

**If you live in the communities of the Village of Canal Winchester or Cities of Gahanna, Hilliard, or Westerville, you may qualify for a residential rain garden cost-share grant! Contact Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District (614-486-9613) to find out if you are eligible. Grants vary in funds available, but can be a great assistance to your rain garden project. Site assessment, sizing calculations, and planting list assistance are also available with these grants.*

Submit Your Rain Garden!

We are diligently working on adding a Residential Gardens feature to our website. Currently we list all the public rain gardens in Central Ohio you can visit. We'd like to expand this to our residential rain gardeners. Visit our website and click on "Submit Your Rain Garden", and attach a picture of it! We will soon be loading residential rain gardens on the website, and we will NOT be posting your address, just your city or township where you live.

Thanks, and good luck with your rain garden installation this year!

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 "Call Before You Dig!"

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.

