Brook Run Project in the Spotlight

§ Sustainability Award
Our nationally recognized neighborhood rain garden project was awarded a Sustainability Award at the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission’s Summit on Sustainability and the Environment held at COSI in October this year. This distinguished award is in the Greenways and Water Quality category. The Central Ohio Rain Garden Initiative, the City of Westerville, and The Ohio State University were named on the award. The team has been humbled by this prestigious honor, and congratulations to all of the nominees!

§ StormCon 2011
During the national storm water conference (StormCon) this year in Anaheim, CA, the Brook Run neighborhood rain garden project was presented by Stephanie Suter (Franklin Soil and Water) and Cathy Eichel (Brown & Caldwell). The project information was well received, and many projects across the nation that were presented have given CORGI several ideas in moving forward. Multiple agencies from across the country have contacted CORGI since the conference to swap ideas and learn more about our project. Municipalities, state agencies, organizations, consulting firms, engineering firms, and supply companies were represented at this large conference. Next year’s conference will be in Denver, CO from August 19th to August 23rd and will feature the latest storm water information, technologies, services, and case studies. Visit www.stormcon.com for more information.

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If you have a rain garden project you would like to share in our newsletter, please contact us through the Contact Us button on our website: www.centralohioraingardens.org.

4th Quarter Calendar of Events
January
January 22-25: CENTS and OSU Nursery Short Courses
This conference has many courses, workshops, exhibitors, continuing education credits, and certification testings. CORGI will have a display booth there this year! Register at www.onla.org.

As of December, there are 231 rain gardens in Franklin County collecting 50,000,000 gallons of storm water per year!
Rain Garden Challenge 2011 - Resident and Township Experiences

Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District was awarded a Community Development Block Grant from the Franklin County Commissioners and the Franklin County Economic Planning and Development Department. As part of the grant, 5 rain garden projects were installed on township properties, and cost-share grants have been made available to residents in the low-to-middle income tax bracket. Below and on the next page are experiences of the program so far. The cost-share program is still going on through June 2012 - contact 614-486-9613 x125 for information.

Initiative at Work
By Kim Shelton, Prairie Township resident

It was entirely by accident that a postcard solicitation of sorts caught my eye. Normally such notifications would be immediately discarded as nothing short of the finest junk mail. Itching for a project that could be completed with minimal funds, the rain garden workshop with Prairie Township and Franklin County Soil & Water offered a ray of hope for the ‘pond’ in our back yard. A free rain barrel? $200 toward the project? Sign me up! Certainly it couldn't be any worse than one of those free dinners for listening to a time share spiel; right? So, with my husband and a neighbor in tow, off we went.

On a gorgeous Spring morning, coffee in hand, we were pleasantly surprised to find ourselves completely enthralled in the presentation and more than willing to assist with installation of the Township’s rain garden. We left full of new knowledge, sporting our brand new rain barrels and excited to get this party started!

After Stephanie's assessment and guidance, we were off and running; the digging began. Unfortunately, a major surgery threw me out of the labor loop and left all of the tough stuff to my husband. Being a real sport about it, he spent the Summer digging. The house gutters and two corner downspouts were redirected, first into the (thank you) rain barrel, then overflowing into the rain garden. Already the garage roof and surrounding land area were draining into the rain garden (previously known as the ‘pond’). Soil drainage was wonderful; I think we could have had a two foot test hole drain in less than 24 hours.

My husband's engineering mind was hard at work to assure our rain garden was a full success. The location is a favorite of our mutts; positioned in a fenced corner adjacent to the road, perfect for barking at passersby. So, of course, we had to strategically accommodate them. He designed the garden in a shape that can only be described as a kidney bean on its way to becoming a heart. The perimeter sits between the garden and the fence, just wide enough for the mower to fit and the critters to have adequate access for effective barking. The interior perimeter was carefully lined with landscaping rocks to prevent erosion and placed in such a way that, when filled, their tops would be visible. A quality mix, from a local supplier, of peat, compost and top soil was next; then, it was my turn.

My job was not the most important or instrumental, but was absolutely the most fun! Being the obsessive bargain hunter that I am, I had been busy for a while stockpiling my findings. On a walk around the block, one Sunday afternoon, I ran across a guy rehabbing his house and in the mood to throw stuff out; that's where I got the mulch, more than enough (yep; you guessed it – free!). A couple of unidentified palm type plants, found for $2.67 each, sit tall at the rear; at that price, who needs a full identity? Fabe spirea, coral bells, fireworks, hot lips turtle heads, hastas, caladiums, Japanese painted ferns, lady’s mantles, tianellas and bugleweed chocolate chips fill the balance of the approximate 100 square feet. Plants were chosen, first and foremost because of their love of water, then price and lastly their unique and/or funny names. Making it a habit to hit (continued on page 3)
nurseries I’d drive by on a regular basis and always asking for their ‘clearance’ stuff, scoping out the plants at grocery stores and the like, utilizing specials and coupons, and splitting items already in our yard, I spent less than $80 and even got some gas points out of the deal.

There were some challenges along the way, such as torrential rains, a stolen wheel barrel, clay, maple roots, too hot, too cold, digging dogs, and trespassing critters; though, all said and done, we are thrilled with the end result and grateful for the opportunity to share in a tiny little piece of making better use of the world in which we live.

Workshops for Residents and Township Rain Gardens Installed: A Community Effort

Throughout the spring of 2011, rain garden workshops were advertised to township residents within Franklin County through the Rain Garden Challenge program. Residents could come and learn what rain gardens are, their benefits, and how to install one. With each of the workshops came a special opportunity - to see a rain garden during its construction and help plant and mulch to finalize its installation to help demonstrate the process to residents. Rain gardens were installed in Mifflin, Prairie, Hamilton, and Clinton Townships. Each workshop and rain garden had its own unique style. At Prairie Township, one trustee gave out 20 rain barrels as an incentive for residents to sign up. Lunch was provided by the Ohio Water Environment Association for the Clinton Township workshop. Clinton Township also put in a rain barrel with each of their rain gardens, where the rain garden serves as overflow from the rain barrel. Residents, township trustees, and township service employees assisted with the installation of each of the rain gardens. Township service employees’ enthusiasm, willingness, and excavation abilities were essential to each rain garden’s success in providing their residents with an excellent storm water management demonstration practice.

The next step is to engage residents to install their own rain garden on their property, as in Mrs. Shelton’s experience in the previous article. There are cost-share funds available to help with a homeowner’s rain garden budget. The funds are available to residents within low to middle income designations. This program is in place until June 2012 and is designed to help lower income families be able to participate in the county-wide enthusiasm for installing rain gardens and thinking about storm water solutions. Contact 614-486-9613 x125 for more information.
New Program: Gardening for Clean Water
To build on the success CORGI has experienced in getting residents to implement beautiful rain gardens, reduce runoff, slow it down, spread it out and have fun, the CORGI funding committee has applied for grant funding and is working with central Ohio nurseries and garden centers to reach a larger audience. In 2012, we plan to work synergistically with garden center design teams, and provide education about gardening methods to improve water quality. Look for our rain garden plant displays in 2012. We will provide information that allows gardeners to apply critical thinking and problem solving to address sustainable gardening on their property. Please ask your local garden center if they are involved with our upcoming program or want to get involved. If you want to get involved, please contact Stephanie Suter. We will also be looking for volunteers to help us install, staff and dismantle our booth at the Central Environmental Nursery Trade Show (CENTS) from January 21st -26th.

Activities:
Technical workshops for design teams
Local design teams can influence gardening practices in our community. We will provide technical workshops to design teams from each of the five garden centers we are partnering with. They will understand the technical aspects of gardening practices that contribute to onsite stormwater abatement, which will lead to a greater use of onsite stormwater management practices through landscape designer recommendations.

Education for nursery employees
Given that local garden centers are in the position to provide information about gardening methods that protect water quality to a wide audience, we will provide educational workshops on local water quality impacts and possible gardening solutions. The goal is for 5 local garden centers to have the knowledge and support required to actively market these gardening methods to their customers.

Garden centers are in a position to reach a large audience. As gardeners look for solutions to problems such as wet spots in the yard, or for new or sustainable practices, employees will be able to guide them toward options that improve the quality of water in our streams.

Educational and instructional workshops for residents
The program will meet gardening center customers where their interests lie and provide educational workshops that promote critical thinking and enhance problem solving and decision making skills around the topic of sustainable gardening methods that protect the quality of our waterways. These methods use native plants and conserve water by making optimal use of rain water onsite.

Resources for the Homeowner
Winter is a great time to start planning for a rain garden. The Central Ohio Rain Garden Initiative has many resources to help in the planning process. The main resource is our website: www.centralohioraingardens.org. This is a “one-stop-shop” for all things rain garden related, and it includes: sizing information, steps to building a rain garden, considerations, planting lists, case studies, pictures of rain gardens across central Ohio, and an area to submit your rain garden to our tracking system once it’s completed. Other educational and technical resources available include:

- Quick Guide to Planning and Installing Rain Gardens
- Brochures
- Rain Garden yard signs (sold for $15 each)
- Planting lists
- The Blue Thumb Guide to Raingardens (sold for $18 through Franklin Soil and Water)
- Electronic versions of other rain garden manuals

We also take requests for workshops for rain gardens if your community is interested. Please visit our website or contact us at (614)486-9613 for more information.

Don’t forget to submit your rain garden online today!
www.centralohioraingardens.org