



USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference

Backyard Rain Gardens: Homeowner Education and Installations

The project objective was to provide homeowners with a set of instructions and residential demonstration sites to facilitate their ability to site and create small wetlands and rain gardens on their residential lots. Diverting stormwater runoff into these wetlands and rain gardens filters the water through mulch and soil as it infiltrates to groundwater, decreasing the volume of contaminated runoff entering the stormwater system or backyard streams. It also creates habitat for wildlife in urban areas. We created four educational presentations for workshops. The presentations addressed stormwater management for homeowners, how to build a backyard rain garden, plant selection for rain gardens and wetlands, and maintaining the garden. A series of "Train the Trainer" workshops were conducted in six counties. Master gardeners were targeted as an initial core group of potential trainers. We evaluated residential sites of homeowners who attended the workshops and expressed interest in hosting a demonstration site. We completed more than 50 site visits, learning much about the typical homeowner concerns and stormwater movement at North Carolina residences. We teamed with homeowners, extension agents, volunteers, and corrections crews to excavate rain gardens by hand or with small backhoes. We installed more than 30 rain gardens, planted with native North Carolina wetland and riparian plants.

Stormwater drainage patterns were documented by photograph before installation of gardens, and can be compared to the post-installation drainage patterns. Lessons learned from this project will be incorporated into educational materials on the website, and used in future training.. Educational materials were made available on the web at www.bae.ncsu.edu/topic/raingarden

Author: Lara Rozzell

Coauthor(s): Kelly Collins, William Hunt, Mitch Woodward, Charlie Humphreys, Charlotte Glen, Jason Zink, Al Hight, William Lord