

Stormwater Management in Your Backyard: An Extension Education Initiative for New Jersey, New York and Virginia



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The goal of this project is to empower local stakeholders in rural / urbanizing watersheds to protect groundwater resources by installing rain gardens on their property.

Abstract

As watershed areas in Gloucester County, NJ, Ulster County, NY and Fredrick County, VA are beginning to accommodate urbanizing communities; the adoption of stormwater management practices on residential properties protects groundwater from pollutants and facilitates the recharge of groundwater resources. A rain garden is a landscaped, shallow depression that is designed to intercept, treat, and infiltrate stormwater at the source before it becomes runoff. The plants used in the rain garden are native to the region and help retain pollutants that could otherwise harm nearby waterways.

The "Stormwater Management in Your Backyard: An Extension Education Initiative for New Jersey, New York and Virginia" project will empower local stakeholders, including volunteer Master Gardeners, farmers and landscape professionals, to design, install and maintain community and private farm rain garden demonstration sites. These stakeholders will be trained over a three year period in NJ, NY and VA by Rutgers, Virginia Tech and Cornell Cooperative Extension faculty and staff. The training will involve the installation of community rain garden demonstration sites. The project is funded by the 2007 National Integrated Water Quality Program.

Introduction

The project is based on a program initiated in 2005 in Union County, NJ. Volunteer Master Gardeners learned stormwater management techniques which led to the creation of four community demonstration gardens. Evaluations from outreach programs for adults and children at the sites indicated an increase in awareness of stormwater management practices that protect groundwater.

Follow-up evaluation surveys indicated that some residents were unable to install rain gardens because of drainage, labor or financial issues. The "Stormwater Management in Your Backyard" project will address these issues by providing training to professional landscapers and offering "mini-grants" of plant materials for 20 farm and residential rain gardens.



The Mayor of Springfield, NJ and Environmental Commission members participate in a community rain garden installation demonstration. Similar programs will continue to be offered Union County, NJ and expanded to Gloucester County, NJ, Ulster County, NY and Fredrick County, VA.



"Mini-Grant" recipients will receive \$200 worth of native plant materials and soil amendments to create a rain garden on their property.

Program Activities and Objectives

Rain Garden Installation and Maintenance Program for Professional Landscapers

In February, 2008 a pilot training program will be held in northern and southern New Jersey. Program topics include: stormwater regulations, rain garden site selection, soil amendments, drainage improvement, native plant selection, installation, maintenance and marketing. In 2009 and 2010 the program will be offered in NJ, NY and VA.

- 100% of participating professionals will complete the 1 ½ day training program.
- 80% of the participants will offer rain garden installation services.
- Professionals offering rain garden services will experience a 20% increase in sales.

Rain Garden Education Program for Volunteer Master Gardeners and Farmers

Ninety volunteer Master Gardeners and farmers will complete a rain garden education program.

- Master Gardeners and volunteer farmers will establish and maintain 9 community demonstration rain gardens.
- Master Gardeners and local Extension professionals will conduct public outreach programs at the demonstration sites.

Rain Garden "Mini-Grant" Incentive Program

To encourage the adoption of rain gardens as a stormwater management practice on residential properties, each county will offer five "mini-grants" to volunteer and public outreach program participants.

- "Mini-Grant" applicants will submit a rain garden plan for their property.
- A team of trained Master Gardeners and Extension professionals will evaluate plans and select grant recipients.
- "Mini-Grant" recipients will install rain gardens on their property.
- Master Gardeners and Extension professionals will visit and photograph the gardens.