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

Madeline Flahive DiNardo*, Gregory Rusciano, Dr. Christopher Obropta, Dr. Brian Benham, Teresa Rusinek, Amy Boyajian
Rutgers Cooperative Extension Union; *flahive@rcrc.rutgers.edu

Abstract:

This 2007 National Integrated Water Quality project targets Gloucester County, NJ, Ulster County, NY and Fredrick County, VA. The groundwater resources in these counties are experiencing pressure due to increasing suburbanization. The objectives of the project are to educate residential and farm property owners about the use of rain gardens as a stormwater management tool and facilitate the adoption of this practice. The project is modeled after a successful rain garden education program in Union County, NJ.

A survey of Union County program participants indicated that some residential property owners would need the services of a landscape professional to install a rain garden on their property. During year one of the project, 90 NJ landscape professionals and Union county vocational technical school horticulture students participated in a pilot rain garden installation training program. The training included classroom instruction and installation of two community rain garden demonstration sites. During year two of the project, the professional landscaper training program will be offered in all three states.

Rain garden education programs for Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists and residents were started in Ulster County, NY and Frederick County, VA. Using their training, the volunteers installed demonstration rain gardens at the Ulster Municipal Building in NY and Hedgebrook Farm in Winchester, VA. Pre and post tests were utilized to measure the knowledge gained by 34 participants. The average scores increased from 46% to 91%. Questions participants improved on were rain garden site selection, proper depth, fertilization practices and maintenance. Year two of the project, the trained volunteers will be offering educational programs at the new demonstration sites for the general public.

Impact Statement:

- Four community demonstration rain garden sites were planted by 124 training program participants.
- The Gloucester County Fair Association, Union County, NJ public works department and the municipality of Ulster, NY public works department provided in-kind support for the project.
- Training programs for professional landscapers were offered in Northern and Southern New Jersey. The programs were promoted by the NJ Landscape and Nursery Association, NJ Farm Bureau and the NJ Landscape Professionals Alliance.
- The rain garden installation program at Hedgebrook Farm during an "Open House" day was featured in articles in the *Winchester Star* and *Lancaster Farmer*.

Category: Human Dimensions

Type of Presentation: Oral Presentation