



2009 CSREES National Water Conference; St. Louis, MO

Rooftop to Rivers Rain Garden Contest- cleaner water through gardening

Emma Melvin*, Ashley Lidman
University of Vermont
* emelvin@uvm.edu

Abstract:

University of Vermont Extension Lake Champlain Sea Grant and Winooski Natural Resource Conservation District joined forces this summer to engage the public in water resource management by raising awareness on the stormwater problem and on a viable solution through the first Rain Garden Contest. The contest was composed of 5 parts, rain garden workshops for the public, distribution of the new Vermont Rain Garden Manual, on-site technical assistance for contest participants, rain garden installations and judging and prize distribution.

Rain Gardens were in the press throughout this rainy summer in Vermont. (http://multimedia.boston.com/pub/m/20794937/vermont_ibm_facility_goes_green_with_rain_garden.htm, <http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/blog/authenticvt/2008/07/rain-gardens-clean-lake.html>, http://www.vpr.net/news_detail/80998/). The contest focus area was Chittenden County, the state's most densely populated area with 8 stormwater impaired brooks running through it, but with the increased awareness, request came from all over the state to participate in the contest. Over 75 people attended the workshops. Out of the 25 people who registered for the contest, 19 participants had their gardens ready for judging. Homeowners, municipalities, schools and companies in Vermont have been changing their way of thinking about stormwater and property management, that installing a rain garden on a property, adds beauty, cleans water, protect the Lake but also brings the community together to create awareness and action.

Impact Statement:

As part of this project 13 new rain gardens were installed and paid for by contest applicants. Over 75 people were trained how to design and install a rain garden. The contest rain gardens are treating just under 4000 square feet of impervious surfaces. 9 local companies who supplied the prizes were educated on rain gardens. Many requests for technical assistance was received from homeowners, schools and businesses for help designing rain gardens that were unable to install within contest time frame. Because of this contest a new category was created in the Williston In Bloom Garden Contest to incorporate rain gardens. We realized that much more technical assistance is needed to help homeowners feel comfortable installing rain gardens. We also realized the need for an online rain garden registry to map installed rain gardens.

Category: Human Dimensions

Type of Presentation: Oral Presentation