



2009 CSREES National Water Conference; St. Louis, MO

Lessons Learned: The North Carolina Backyard Rain Garden Program

Mitch Woodward*, William F. Hunt, Wendi Hartup
NC CES

* mitchell_woodward@ncsu.edu

Abstract:

Research conducted at the North Carolina State University and elsewhere has determined that bioretention practices are very effective in reducing polluted stormwater runoff from urban areas. Smaller residential bioretention areas, also known as rain gardens, have proven to be an effective means of removing metals, nutrients, sediment and fecal coliform provided that they have been designed, sited, constructed and maintained properly. The university, local and state governments have been promoting the installation of rain gardens and other stormwater practices in Phase I and II communities for many years; however, very few homeowners and commercial landscape contractors have a working knowledge of the benefits of rain gardens, their installation or their maintenance requirements. To help promote rain gardens and address these needs, the North Carolina Backyard Rain Garden Program was implemented during the summer of 2006 in a six-county pilot area. Funded as an EPA 319(h) project, the program (1) developed an education program by conducting homeowner workshops in each county, (2) installed more than 40 residential demonstration rain gardens, and (3) developed educational and reference materials making them available at the following website: www.bae.ncsu.edu/topic/rain_garden. More recently, an assessment was performed to determine:

- How many rain gardens continued to function properly
- What, if any maintenance had been performed
- Common traits among the cooperators with successful rain gardens.
- Education needs for homeowners and installers.

Impact Statement:

The rain garden team completed 73 site assessments and installed 40 demonstration rain gardens. These sites have been used in numerous local and regional education events, featured in media broadcasts, and in at least one county, were used to train homeowners and landscape professionals who are obligated to install these practices to meet pervious area requirements. County Extension Agents working with a campus Extension associate and specialist developed training and reference materials available on line at: <http://www.bae.ncsu.edu/topic/raingarden/>.

Category: Watershed Assessment and Restoration

Type of Presentation: Oral Presentation