



Rain Gardens

Project Description and Purpose

A rain garden is simply a planted depression that slows and filters rainwater runoff from impervious surfaces such as building roofs and parking lots. To demonstrate the benefits of creating sustainable landscapes that actively improve environmental quality and save funds, three agencies worked together to install a demonstration rain garden at the Ohio Agricultural Service Center in Hancock County, Ohio. Creating a demonstration garden on a very active public site allows many people in the community to witness the process and see first-hand what sustainable landscapes are capable of achieving.

To create this small demonstration garden, soil was removed and organic material with good porosity was installed before a variety of water-tolerant plants was planted. A rain barrel was attached to the buildings' drain spout with an overflow pipe. As part of the design, once the rain barrel fills, it overflows onto rocks and flows into the rain garden. Water velocity of runoff from impervious surfaces is slowed, detained, and naturally filtered before percolating into the ground or flowing off site.

Project Goals of Creating Conservation Partnership and Educating Community Achieved

This project was the first rain garden in Hancock County, Ohio. The ongoing goal is to raise awareness and inform and educate the community about the benefits of a rain garden and its practical application in managing storm water runoff from impermeable surfaces.

Three primary agencies were involved in this project: Hancock Park District, Hancock Soil and Water Conservation District, and Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener Program. Each agency contributed staff time for planning, coordinating, plant growth,



Hancock County's first rain garden

construction, upkeep, and education. Hancock County Commissioners contributed funds for signage and supplies.

The Hancock Park District propagated plants in the greenhouse and planted the rain garden, which was prepared by a local youth group, and then developed a rain garden brochure with plant listing. The general brochure is available at all three agency offices, including the Hancock Soil and Water Conservation District office, where the rain garden is located.

The Hancock Soil and Water Conservation District monitors water levels in the rain barrel. All agencies contribute staff time to weed control.

Small Project Produces Big Dividends

As a demonstration project, this rain garden serves as an excellent example of what can be done at low cost on public lands and home sites to reduce the negative effects of storm water. As added benefits, the rain garden creates a more permeable surface that drains water, reduces lawn maintenance, and adds beauty and wildlife habitat.

For more information on how the Hancock Park District partnered to create this rain garden and the lessons learned, contact: Gary Pruitt, Park District Director, gpruitt@hancockparks.com, 419.425.7275