



Creative and Beautiful Pollution Prevention

Groundwater Guardian Featured Activity

By Cathy Lotzer, Marshfield Area Groundwater Guardians

Fall 2004

Groundwater Guardians for the Marshfield, Wisconsin Area have within the past year created two community demonstration rain gardens. The reason for “community and demonstration” was to try to inspire local residents to create similar gardens in their own yards.

Their first demonstration community rain garden project actually began when a Marshfield Groundwater Guardian member became interested in a front page rain garden article she saw in a previous *Aquifer* edition. The member researched the concept and brought the idea of a community rain garden to the group’s next meeting. The group agreed that creation of a demonstration rain garden would be a great Result Oriented Activity. A subcommittee was formed to research, plan, design, and eventually seek volunteers to create the garden.

The most difficult part of the process was finding a location that would be functional for a rain garden and yet be highly visible to the general public. The group decided on Griese Park, which was home to a city-owned park. The garden was built on a slope of land centered among several soccer fields, parking lots, and walking trails.

The Griese Park Rain Garden is approximately 500-square-foot with nearly 500 native plants. All funding for the project was provided by volunteers of the Groundwater Guardian group and the Marshfield Electric and Water Department. The total cost was mostly for plants, which were all purchased through a native plant retailer.

The group also developed a mission statement, “to build a demonstration rain garden to reduce pollution, increase groundwater recharge and to promote and inspire rain garden creation in other locations such as residential areas, parks, businesses, and schools” and included this language in the permanent signage that was erected at the garden to inform visitors and also direct them to the group’s website for more information. The website, <http://mewd.com/raingarden.htm> details the creation process of both community gardens through the use of PowerPoint® presentations as well as thumbnail images on the main page.

The group’s second demonstration garden was created at the House of the Dove (hospice center) at 613 Western Avenue in Marshfield. A 350 square-foot garden was created this past June, again in cooperation with Wood County Master Gardeners. The group’s website also includes this garden with information on the garden’s design, dimensions, plant names, and pictures. The cost of this garden was only \$215 because many of the plants were donated by volunteers.

Although both rain gardens were carefully planned and included detailed designs, our group is sure to stress to our residents that they should be creative with their own gardens. A rain garden in their own yard can be a very simple design with just a few plants. As long as the depression that is dug allows for runoff water to enter the garden and the plants within the garden



are water tolerant, pretty much anything goes we tell residents. We let them know that the best plants are those with deep roots that will help filter runoff water by removing nutrients and pollutants, yet feeding the plants themselves.

Working in cooperation with Wood County Master Gardeners on both projects was a great opportunity for both groups to share their knowledge and expertise and create a finished project that was both beautiful and functional.

We also received a great deal of information from the University of Wisconsin Extension Office with their many brochures and pamphlets on Rain Gardens. Since then, the UW-Extension Basin Education Program and DNR runoff Management Section have created a “Rain Garden Educator’s Kit.” Marshfield’s Griese Park Rain Garden is actually featured in the kit as a demonstration garden.♦

▲ *Groundwater Guardian Team members pose after the completion of the House of the Dove rain garden. From left, Dorthy Flees, Dan Flees, Linda Bodien, Cathy Lotzer, Ron Bodien, and Terri Hamus.*

▼ *Keri Dieringer works to spread fresh soil before she and Cathy Lotzer can put the plants in to the rain garden.*

