



**Kitsap
County**

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



RAIN GARDEN & GREEN STORMWATER SOLUTIONS

2015

BY THE NUMBERS

- 1500 adults discussed stormwater reduction with RGM volunteers and WSU staff
- 14 public outreach days
- 100 youth learned how rain gardens reduce water pollution
- 61 citizens attended rain garden workshops and learned how to reduce stormwater pollution
- 7 advanced education trainings for RGMs (new & alumni)
- 185 professionals have attended Professional Rain Garden Workshop since 2011
- 10 presenters from WSU Extension, industry & public agencies presented at 2 day workshop



Sharing Pollution Solutions with the Community

ISSUE

Washington's rivers, lakes, and aquifers provide water for agricultural, residential and recreational use. Safe, reliable sources of water must be maintained to meet the needs of our growing population and the wildlife with whom we share these waters.

Stormwater run off has been linked to pollution of drinking water supplies, declining health of wildlife and fish species and has been identified as the leading cause of pollution in the Puget Sound region. Rain and snow-melt carry pollution into streams & the Sound, closing beaches to shellfish harvesting and other forms of recreation.

Stormwater runoff is a major concern in Kitsap County, which has nearly 300 miles of shoreline and ranks third in the state in terms of its population density.

RESPONSE

The Rain Garden Mentor Program (RGM) was created at WSU Kitsap Extension in 2010 as a way to empower citizens to address stormwater issues at home. RGM volunteers are recruited from other WSU volunteer programs such as Master Gardeners and Stream Stewards due to their baseline knowledge of environmental issues, native plants and soils gained in those programs.

RGMs receive training on the importance of clean water and the specific techniques gardeners and homeowners in general can enact to infiltrate stormwater at home. Safely infiltrating stormwater onsite is one of the basic principals of Green Stormwater solutions (GSS). Annual continuing education opportunities allow RGMs to advance their knowledge, serve as educators for the public, and be mentors to new volunteers.

In 2011, the Professional Rain Garden Workshop was created to address the need for stormwater education for small business owners and to increase the capacity for rain garden installations in Kitsap County and the Puget Sound region.

Partnering with the Washington State Nursery & Landscape Association (WSNLA) beginning in 2012, an annual survey has been given to determine the educational needs and desires of green industry professionals. The survey results are used to tailor the curriculum offered in the Professional Rain Garden Workshop to real-time industry educational needs.



QUOTES

Homeowner assisted by RGMs:

"The plan now is to have the rain gardens by the road installed and running before the next major storms...I promise to keep you in the loop with my progress and certainly the finished results!"

Rain Garden Mentors:

"My skills have improved on how to explain stormwater and drainage pathways to the public- both through the in class education and through the tours and website."

Professional Rain Garden Workshop Attendees:

"I can implement this right away with interested clients!"

"[The workshop content] will help me recognize opportunities for installations and best practices."

IMPACTS

Individual property owners can have a dramatic, positive impact on water quality when they understand stormwater pollution, and learn/implement techniques to curb it. In 2015, 37 Rain Garden Mentor volunteers donated more than 500 hours of time to raise awareness of stormwater issues. RGMs worked with 9 individual property owners not eligible for county incentives to recommend techniques to address runoff, including damage caused by flooding and erosion.

Rain Garden Mentors participated in 14 days of educational outreach around the county, engaging 1500 citizens in one- one-one discussions. Volunteers deliver the message that rain gardens and other simple techniques such as amending soil can protect our water and recharge our aquifers. During those events, RGMs generated 124 homeowner referrals to the rain garden incentive program with the Kitsap Conservation District.

Rain Garden Mentors held 2 classes to share the benefits and beauty of rain gardens. 61 attendees came away with the knowledge and resources to install their own at home. By leading fun, hands-on activities at the annual Water Festival, RGMs taught 100 4th graders.

Rain Garden Mentors attended advanced education opportunities, including 2 tours of Kitsap County Public Works GSS facilities. Volunteers learned from stormwater personnel, allowing them to see the purpose and benefits of local projects and later share those projects with fellow citizens.

When builders/landscapers are properly trained in GSS, they can have a positive influence on the behavior of the individuals that employ them to install critical projects. As of 2015, 185 industry professionals have attended the Professional Rain Garden Workshop. Attendees of the workshop include landscapers, home builders, compost suppliers and employees of public agencies such as the Public Works Stormwater Division, Department of Community Development and Conservation Districts.

Now there is a local resource for hiring a professional who has training on rain gardens. 66 business owners that wish to market directly to the public now appear on the list maintained by WSU Kitsap since 2011 and updated annually.