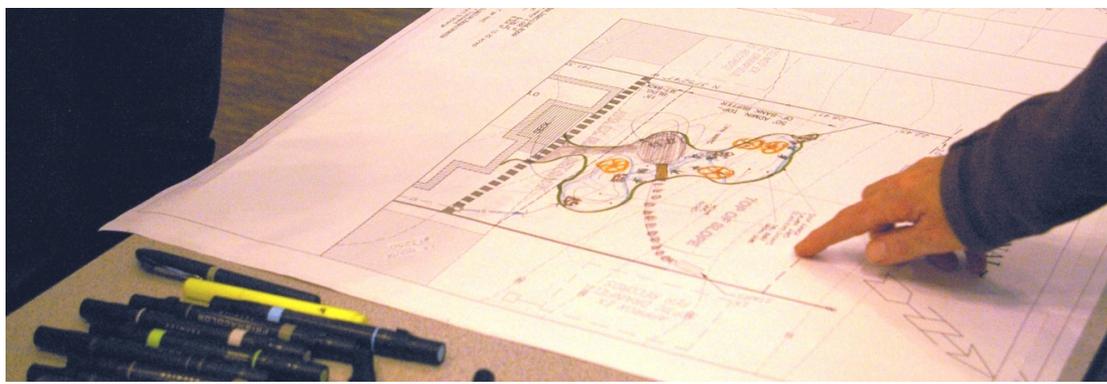




WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



RAIN GARDEN & LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

2014

BY THE NUMBERS

- 20 public outreach events staffed by RGM volunteers
- 912 direct and 7,300 indirect contacts at spring & fall Home & Garden Shows combined
- 575 direct and 50,000 indirect contacts with at Kitsap Fair & Stampede
- 10 trainings held for RGMs (new & alumni) with 3 days field training on installation
- 14 citizens received onsite advice on rain garden feasibility at their homes
- 10 presenters from WSU Extension, industry & public agencies presented at 2 day workshop
- 45 attendees over 2 days



Sharing Green Stormwater Solutions with the Community

ISSUE

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

Stormwater runoff 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.

For Kitsap County, stormwater runoff is a major concern in Kitsap County, which has nearly 300 miles of shoreline and salmon bearing streams.

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. Rain Garden Mentor 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.

Rain Garden Mentors 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 Rain Garden Mentors to advance their knowledge over time and serve as educators for the public, and be mentors and educators 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 yearly to tailor the curriculum offered in the Professional Rain Garden Workshop to real-time industry educational needs.



QUOTES

Homeowner:

"Having no idea that your report would be so detailed and professional, I am in awe of you all and over-the-top grateful for all of the work that went into this project! You have provided me with a complete roadmap to start and complete the rain gardens that will have such a positive effect on my property and the surrounding environment. Thank you so much for your time and dedication to preventing rain water runoff, and sharing your expertise with the community."

Rain Garden Mentors:

"I think it is a great program and I thoroughly enjoy working on rain garden projects and learning new things all the time."

Workshop Attendees:

"There was a lot of great info that I did not know. I will definitely use it in my work from now on."

"Invite me more! Please! I would like to attend more classes like this one (LID and development related)."

IMPACTS

Homeowners can have a dramatic, positive impact on water quality when they understand the origins of stormwater pollution and learn/implement techniques to curb it. Rain Garden Mentors hosted 6 public rain garden workshops for 136 Kitsap citizens in 2014 to raise awareness of the benefits and beauty of rain gardens.

Rain Garden Mentors participated in more than 20 educational outreach events around the county in 2014, reaching more than 1,600 individuals directly with the message that rain gardens and other simple techniques such as amending soil and planting native plants can help protect the water around us and recharge our aquifers.

In 2014 33 Rain Garden Mentor volunteers engaged in advanced educational activities such as a field based learning exercise to install a rain garden from the design phase through completion, take in "lessons learned" through tours of local GSS projects and took a class at the WSU Puyallup LID (Low Impact Development) Research Station from faculty.

Since WSU Kitsap Extension created the Rain Garden Mentor Program in 2010 it has invited other extension offices statewide to it's trainings and has shared curriculum. Now 14 other county extension offices train volunteers on the benefits or rain gardens and other GSS techniques.

When builder/landscapers are properly trained in GSS, they can have a positive influence on the behavior of homeowners and other small business owners who employ them to install critical projects. As of 2014, 150 industry professionals have attended the two day Professional Rain Garden Workshop offered at WSU Kitsap Extension.

Homeowners and small business owners in Kitsap now have a resource for hiring a professional to install a rain garden, who they can verify has undertaken a professional level training on the topic. 56 business owners that wish to market directly to the public now appear on that list. Attendees of the workshop include septic installers, landscapers, home builders, compost suppliers and employees of public agencies such as the Department of Community Development and Conservation Districts.

As many as 6 different County Extension personnel have attended WSU Kitsap Extension's Professional Rain Garden Workshop and used the class materials to offer their own similar trainings, raising the capacity for important rain garden installations regionwide.

Many professionals need continuing education to maintain certifications in their fields. The Professional Rain Garden Workshop allows septic installers, Certified Professional Horticulturists (CPH), Certified Landscape Technicians (CLT), and ecoPRO certified landscapers to get necessary certification credits while learning how to use environmentally friendly Green Stormwater techniques.