

Collaboration Leads to Rain Garden at Mayfield School Board Office

Mayfield Heights, OH - In late November, students installed the first rain garden on Mayfield City School Property in front of the Board of Education building in Mayfield Heights. This rain garden is the result of a partnership with the Mayfield City School District, the Cities of Highland Heights and Mayfield Heights, the Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District and the Euclid Creek Watershed Council. Students from Mayfield City Schools and the Gates Mills Environmental Education Center Excel TECC Horticulture Center, led by teacher Ed Tuhela, designed and planted the garden, which will demonstrate the benefits of these gardens in our community to improve our streams and natural resources.

A rain garden is an attractive landscaped area planted with perennial native plants which don't mind getting "wet feet". Built in a bowl shape, a rain garden is designed to increase infiltration allowing rain and snowmelt to seep naturally into the ground. Native plants assist by soaking up water in their roots which can grow as deep as 15 feet. Benefits of rain gardens are multiple: they recharge groundwater supply, prevent water quality problems, provide habitat for birds and butterflies, and are beautiful landscape features.

Recent studies have shown that up to 70% of the pollution in our streams, rivers and lakes is transported there by rain, in the form of runoff which negatively affects aquatic life. Some of the common "non point source pollutants" from our yards that end up in our local waterways include soil, fertilizers, pesticides, pet wastes, grass clippings and other yard debris. Rain gardens are one measure than can help increase the infiltration of storm water.

This particular Rain Garden was constructed to collect and treat storm water generated from 1,100 square feet of the Mayfield School Board Building roof. Water that previously flowed into a storm drain was diverted into the rain garden to allow the storm water to be filtered of pollutants and to infiltrate into the soil providing groundwater recharge. Excess water overflows into a storm drain located at the bottom of the hill and ultimately into the Chagrin River.

The Euclid Creek Watershed Council consists of representatives from the eight communities drained by Euclid Creek. Friends of Euclid Creek is a grass-roots organization that promotes the protection and restoration of Euclid Creek and its tributaries. These two groups, with assistance from Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District, are working to raise awareness about Euclid Creek issues and working to improve conditions in and around the creek.

A rain garden dedication ceremony was held on December 8, 2009, to celebrate the Mayfield School



Excel TECC Students Planting Rain Garden



Rain Garden Dedication Celebration

rain garden project and to thank the project partners and students for their hard work. The rain garden and educational signage are located at 1101 SOM Center Road in Mayfield Heights in front of the School Board Office Building.

If you are interested in planting a rain garden on your property, contact the Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District or download a manual on their website: www.cuyahogawcd.org. In 2010, Cuyahoga SWCD will be selling rain garden native plant kits at 3 different sales throughout the County. For more information, call or email Euclid Creek Watershed Coordinator Claire Posius at 216-524-6580 x16 or cposius@cuyahogawcd.org.