

Rain gardens are an easy way to go green

By Chad Brooks | Daily Herald Staff

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A local "green" group in Barrington is hoping to give residents reasons why rainy days aren't so bad.

The Fox Point Green Committee is holding a community presentation about rain gardens to give residents an easy way to help the environment.

The Lake County Stormwater Management Commission describes a rain garden as an area of someone's yard that soaks up rainwater, mainly from a roof, but also from driveways and lawns.

The gardens, which consist of wildflowers and other native vegetation, fill with a few inches of water and allow the water to slowly filter into the ground rather than running off into storm drains.

Without rain gardens, the water runs into drains and streams, all the while picking up pollutants along the way, said Nancy Bachmann, a member of the Fox Point Green Committee.

Rain gardens are able to remove those pollutants, such as fertilizers.

"They will absorb some of the negative elements in the storm water and purify it," Bachmann said.

During the presentation, scheduled for 7 p.m. May 22 at the Barrington Area Library, ecological designer John Gishnock III from Formecology in Evansville, Wis., will give residents tips about how to build their own rain gardens.

Gishnock said the presentation is a "how-to" guide for building rain gardens. He said the proper size, design and what plants to fill it with all will be discussed.

"We explain it all really well," Gishnock said of the presentation, which he gives throughout the Midwest.

Both Bachmann and Gishnock agree that rain gardens are becoming increasingly popular among homeowners looking for ways to go green.

During a recent Citizens for Conservation plant sale, Bachmann said native plants were a big seller.

"We had more orders this year than we have had in the past for native plants," Bachmann said.

Plants that are good for rain gardens in the Midwest include purple-stemmed asters, bonesets, prairie blazing star s and blue vervains.

"There are hundreds of plants that can be used," Gishnock said.

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One of the nice things about building a rain garden, Bachmann said, is that it is an easy activity to complete.

"It is not complicated," she said. "It is something everyone who has a yard can do."

Inverness' Meredith Tucker built a 600-square-foot rain garden in her yard last year and said she loves it.

After all the plants bloomed last summer, Tucker said many neighbors wanted to check it out.

"Everyone stopped by to see the rain garden because it was so spectacular," she said.

Through her work with Citizens for Conservation, Tucker said she understands just how important water preservation is.

"I think that water is going to be the number one conservation issue in the future," she said. "We are running out of it."

To learn more about rain gardens, visit www.co.lake.il.us/smc/bmp/raingarden.asp.

If you go

What: Rain Garden presentation by ecological designer John Gishnock III

When: 7 p.m. May 22

Where: Barrington Area Library, 505 N. Northwest Hwy. Admission: Free

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