



People and Nature: Our Future is in the Balance

National Wildlife Federation

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Edgewood College
Alternative Stormwater Management Plan - Rain Gardens
Madison, Wisconsin
(status of project, Spring 2001)

Campus Profile

Edgewood College is a four-year liberal arts college that is tucked away on the shores of Lake Wingra in Madison, Wisconsin and is just minutes from downtown. Edgewood currently has 1,500 undergraduate students and 500 graduate students enrolled.

Group/Class Profile

The Rain Garden project was born as an idea to carry out a project in a human issues course that was designed to promote awareness between people and the environment they live in. After finding the NWF fellowship proposal we decided to really go full force to make this project a success. We started out with a small group in the class and ended up with seven students and tremendous support from the college that contributed to this project's success.

Project Goals and Summary

Our project promotes the use of "rain gardens" as an alternative stormwater management practice that provides bioretention and ecological restoration.

Accomplishments

This project helped to: promote awareness among students and the larger community of local water quality problems and potential solutions; reduce the amount of stormwater pollutants that enter area lakes; increase native vegetation and wildlife habitat in the local watershed; promote an active watershed community by enhancing partnerships between Edgewood College and local neighborhoods; and contribute toward the national campus ecology movement by providing information on the value and design of stormwater bioretention systems.

When we started this project, we had no idea that it would go so far. We started out thinking that we would just plant some flowers and grasses to help the water infiltrate into the ground at a faster rate and in turn reduce the amount of erosion in certain areas of Edgewood's landscapes. We ended up getting a lot of attention from our neighbors who wanted to help us and create their own rain gardens on their property.

Strategies and Steps Taken

We designed and constructed rain gardens on the Edgewood campus and conducted outreach activities (including workshops, an information pamphlet, a how-to manual, and a Web site -- <http://natsci.edgewood.edu/wingra/management/raingardens/>) that promote the rain garden concept in the local community.

Role of Campus Ecology

Campus Ecology also played an incredible role in the success of our project. In order to meet the guidelines for the fellowship we really had to increase our expectations of the project and ourselves.

Funding Sources

To increase our chances of getting the fellowship we decided to not ask for the maximum amount of funds that they offered. We asked for \$900 from them and then asked the Natural Science department at Edgewood what they could contribute. They decided that they could give us \$400 and the Development office at Edgewood decided to contribute another \$500. That made a total of \$1,800 that we used to its fullest potential.

Key Groups/Allies Involved

The people that we have to thank besides the members of our group would be our professor, Jim Lorman, who served as the advisor in our project. He really helped us take our rain garden to the limits. We also need to thank Tim Andrews, who is the Landscape and Grounds Facilitator at Edgewood, for all of his support and help in the actual construction of the rain garden and David Shiffert, our Watershed Coordinator. We would also like to thank Roger Bannerman who works for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. And last, but not least, we would like to thank Applied Ecological Services for their consulting services.

Next Year's Plans

Our hope for the future is that this will be a never-ending project and opportunity to learn for all ages. There are current plans to map out the rain gardens and monitor each individual plant, and the amount of rainfall is also being monitored.

Quote or Helpful Hint

"If you have a spark in you that wants to change the environment and world that we live in, the sky is the limit. Don't just dream about it, do it."

Contacts

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Guide to Photos:

Rain Garden I is a picture of the site that was expanded.

Rain Garden II is a picture of part of the group in action on Earth Day, which was the first work day of the expansion.

Rain Garden III is the new site that is currently being constructed.

Rain Garden IV is a closer view of the extension of the rain garden.