

Model Green for Your Clients

It's hard to promote green choices if you don't know how they work, why they're important, what they'll cost, how they'll look, or what maintenance is required. So start that learning curve where you work and live. Begin selecting choices that are easiest to implement. Plant a tree, install a rain barrel, or plant a raingarden to capture runoff from one downspout. You'll develop a comfort level with these approaches and your neighbors will see your success and want to follow suit. Get started today!

Trees

Trees are great storm water managers. They intercept rain and slow erosion, take up and treat storm water, and promote infiltration to recharge our aquifers. Believe it or not, it is easy to go wrong when planting trees, so learning proper planting and maintenance techniques is important so your investment is not wasted.

Rochester has several qualified arborists and tree nurseries with staff that can offer expert advice. The City Forester, Jacob Ryg, is another great resource. The RNeighborWoods program sponsors Citizen Forester training sessions every spring and fall (go to www.RNeighbors.org for upcoming training dates).

Rain Barrels

Urbanization increases the extent of impervious surfaces and decreases the amount of storm water infiltration. Capturing and using rain water instead of tap water helps offset this lost groundwater recharge. It is expensive to drill water supply wells, pump groundwater, treat it, and distribute it to our homes. Plants don't need to have the same high quality water that we need to drink. So save the best water for people and take advantage of free rain water for your non-food plants.

Rain barrels and do-it-yourself rain barrel kits can be purchased from many landscape and home improvement retailers. Rochester Public Utilities and other business and agency partners are developing a program to obtain barrels and convert them into rain barrels for sale at a reduced price. The first sale is planned for the spring of 2009, so watch for more information.

Raingardens

Raingardens are special gardens strategically placed to intercept rainwater and planted with water-tolerant plants that use, treat, and infiltrate storm water on-site. Their size depends on the amount of impervious area being treated and their look, manicured or wild, depending on the inclination of the gardener. Examples of commercial, residential, and public raingardens are blooming in Rochester. Fleet Farm's parking lot raingardens, the Eagle Scout-led project at Manor Ridge Park in NW Rochester, or the raingarden in front of the Forestry Operations building off Center St. are easy to view.

There are several landscape designers in Rochester that can provide professional assistance in locating and designing raingardens. There are also many good resources on the internet for do-it-yourselfers, including the Blue Thumb program (www.bluethumb.org) that gives step-by-step instructions. A citizen's task force has just created the "Realize Raingardens Rochester" plan to promote the installation of residential raingardens, watch for more details coming soon!

Keep your storm water on site so that it is not lost to the landscape and our drinking water supply.