

Article from Osceola Sun June 2006

### **Rain Gardens: Landscaping for Our Environment**

Homeowners in many parts of the country are catching on to rain gardens as one way they can contribute to keeping our waters as clean as possible for future generations. As we see more of our agricultural and forested lands get developed the storm water runoff that typically filtered back into the land is now becoming an environmental challenge. It overburdens storm water treatment systems and sweeps sediment and pollutants such as phosphorous from fertilizers into our streams, rivers and lakes.



Ultimately our ground water is affected. Here in Wisconsin where 95% of people rely on groundwater for their drinking water, adequate and clean water should be a concern for all of us. Rain gardens offer an attractive ecological solution. A rain garden is simply a shallow depression-rather than your typical raised bed-filled with moisture loving plants. Like a natural sponge, the rain garden soaks up, filters and helps evaporate water from roofs, and other impervious surfaces rather than running off to a storm drain.

Nancy Knutsen, Osceola homeowner living by Lotus Lake had St. Croix Valley Landscaping put in rain gardens when they were planning their landscaping. She says, "We had never heard of rain gardens. We had severe erosion problems before the rain gardens went in and now it is all taken care of for us. They eliminate a lot of work and require very little watering to keep the plants looking nice."

The look of the rain garden can be tailored to fit the style of your home and landscaping. Many use native plants and how they are designed will determine if the rain garden will have a wild look or more traditional cultivated garden look. Knutsen goes on to say, "we have three different types of rain gardens, one that attracts butterflies and hummingbirds and the others just blend into the rest of the landscaping. We wouldn't have had this diversity in plants without these rain gardens".

While an individual rain garden in a yard may seem like a small thing collectively they provide significant community environmental

benefits including:

- Increasing the amount of water that filters into the ground
- Protecting communities from flooding and drainage problems
- Protecting streams and lakes from pollutants carried by storm water
- Enhancing the beauty of yards and neighborhoods
- Providing valuable habitat for birds, butterflies and beneficial insects

St. Croix Valley Landscaping is a family owned landscaping company specializing in environmentally friendly landscaping design and build services. They are one of the first landscaping companies in the area to begin installing rain gardens in 2003.