



RAIN GARDEN MENTORS 2019

BY THE NUMBERS

- Over 1000 adults discussed stormwater impacts with WSU staff & volunteers
- 289 youth learned rain gardens reduce water pollution
- 13 public outreach events focused on green stormwater solutions: "Rain Gardens & More!"
- 11 advanced education trainings for RGMs (new & alumni)
- 301 in industry have attended Professional Rain Garden Workshop since 2011
- 137 attend Septic Sense Workshop attendees to learn solutions to common septic problems & latest permitting guidelines.



ISSUE

Washington's rivers, lakes, and aquifers provide water for agricultural, residential and recreational use. Safe, reliable sources of water must be maintained to meet the needs of our growing population and the wildlife with whom we share these waters. Stormwater run-off has been linked to pollution of drinking water supplies, declining health of wildlife and fish species and has been identified as the leading cause of pollution in the Puget Sound region. Rain and snowmelt carry pollution into streams & the Sound, closing beaches to shellfish harvesting and other forms of recreation. Stormwater runoff is a major concern in Kitsap County, which has nearly 300 miles of shoreline and ranks third in the state in terms of its population density.

PURPOSE

The Rain Garden Mentor Program (RGM) was created at WSU Kitsap Extension in 2010 as a way to empower citizens to address stormwater issues at home. RGM volunteers are recruited from other WSU volunteer programs such as Master Gardeners and Stream Stewards due to their baseline knowledge of environmental issues, native plants and soils gained in those programs.

RESPONSE

RGMs receive training on the importance of clean water and the specific techniques gardeners and homeowners in general can enact to infiltrate stormwater at home. Safely infiltrating stormwater onsite is one of the basic principles of Green Stormwater solutions (GSS). Annual continuing education opportunities allow RGMs to advance their knowledge, serve as educators for the public, and be mentors to new volunteers. In 2011, the Professional Rain Garden Workshop was created to address the need for stormwater education for small business owners and to increase the capacity for rain garden installations in Kitsap County and the Puget Sound region. Partnering with the Washington State Nursery & Landscape Association (WSNLA) beginning in 2012, an annual survey has been given to determine the educational needs and desires of green industry professionals. Survey results were used to develop the pilot Drainage Sense Pro Workshop, created to increase the capacity for landscape and other contractors to prevent, reduce or solve drainage problems on residential & small commercial properties.



IMPACTS

- Individual property owners can have a dramatic, positive impact on water quality when they understand stormwater pollution and learn/implement techniques to curb it.
- In 2019,
 - ⇒ 53 Rain Garden Mentor volunteers donated more than 500 hours of time to raise awareness of stormwater issues.
 - ⇒ RGMs worked with 11 individual property owners not eligible for county incentives to recommend techniques to address runoff, including damage caused by flooding and erosion.
 - ⇒ Rain Garden Mentors participated in 18 days of educational outreach around the county, engaging over 1000 citizens in one-on-one discussions.
 - ⇒ Rain Garden Mentors who are also Master Gardeners (MG) used regularly scheduled MG plant diagnostic clinic events to deliver the message that rain gardens and other simple techniques such as amending soil can protect our water and recharge our aquifers.
 - ◊ During those events, RGMs generated over 50 homeowner referrals to the rain garden incentive program with the Kitsap Conservation District.
 - ◊ By leading fun, hands-on activities at the annual Water Festival, RGMs taught 86 4th graders and their adult chaperones how rain gardens can be used to recharge our drinking water while infiltrating stormwater.
 - ⇒ As of 2019, 301 industry professionals have attended the Professional Rain Garden Workshop.
 - ◊ Attendees of the workshop include landscapers, home builders, and employees of public agencies like the Public Works Stormwater Division, and Conservation Districts.
 - ◊ Now there is a local resource for hiring a professional who has training on rain gardens.
- 84 business owners that wish to market directly to the public now appear on the list maintained by WSU Kitsap since 2011 and updated biennially.

