

# Demo Rain Garden

## Bartholomew County



### Background Information

The site had previously been a flat and open, windswept area occupied by turf grass adjacent to a mature oak tree. The raingarden is currently located at the IUPU Columbus Campus in a parking lot island. This site was chosen because it received a lot of snow in the winter, especially due to snow plowing in the parking lot. Additionally, two professors from the university were interested in using the area for educational purposes, which means they were likely to maintain it too. Campus security was concerned about the project, but the continual promotion kept it going underway.



The garden was planted with native prairie plants such as prairie drop seed, big bluestem, and compass plant. It was designed by Kris Medic, a Bartholomew County Extension Educator. Having the right soil composition as well as hardy perennials to fill the garden was an important factor in the design process. It was installed by the Rainscaping education course in Bartholomew County as part of the demonstration for the course. Coordinators were able to help with the planting along with the partnership by Indiana University Professors Luke Jacobus and Barbara Hass Jacobus. This partnership was critical to the success of the project and aided coordinators in getting this project off the ground. The rain garden has a strong ecological influence, as it filters pollutants from the parking lot. It also aided to naturally introduce birds and pollinators. Two professors also plan to use this space as an area for teaching botany and biology.

Common Milkweed



Compass Plant



New England Aster



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## Garden Design: Plantings and Information

Plant Scientific Name	Common Name
Prairie dropseed	( <i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i> )
Big bluestem	( <i>Andropogon gerardii</i> )
Queen of the prairie	( <i>Filipendula rubra</i> )
Great blue lobelia	( <i>Lobelia siphilitica</i> )
Compass plant	( <i>Silphium laciniatum</i> )
Common Milkweed	( <i>Asclepias syriaca</i> )
New England aster	( <i>Symphyotrichum novae-angliae</i> )
Blue flag iris	( <i>Iris virginica shrevei</i> )
Blue mistflower	( <i>Eupatorium coelestinum</i> )
Wild geranium	( <i>Geranium maculatum</i> )

### Fully Itemized Budget

Item(s) Origins	Cost
Spence Restoration Nursery Inc	\$220.80
Brad Helton d/b/a Helton Landscaping	\$100.00
Spence Restoration Nursery Inc	\$66.24
Wischmeier Nursery	\$25.00
Wischmeier Nursery	\$54.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$466.04</b>



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## Maintenance Plan: Establishment Period

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- The garden should be weeded every 2-4 weeks for first six months, then tentatively once a month thereafter.
- Tracking progress of the garden:
  - If desired, a before and after photo of the garden should be taken when it is weeded to help keep track of what should be weeded and what plants should not be removed.
  - Taking a photo of your garden every few weeks will allow one to visually see the maturation of the garden over time; photos could be uploaded to a computer or printed and kept in a photo album to keep as part of the educational display.

## Maintenance Plan: General Maintenance

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- Fertilizer
  - Some starter fertilizer could be used on the site due to low potassium levels. Otherwise, the native plants should adapt to the soil type on site.
- Watering
  - From installation for about a month – water as weeded; about 30 minutes – make sure everything's moist.
  - Once plants are established, you should not need to water them except during prolonged dry periods (about one week).
  - If excessive rain is experienced, it is advised to temporarily reroute some incoming water away from the garden by cutting a notch in the berm. Large, mature plants handle saturation better than young, small plants.
  - Water from the rain barrels can be used to water the garden, but in case of a dry period a hose and/or sprinkler system may be used.
- Weeding
  - During the first few establishment years, weeding should take place every month as needed. Over time, the plants will fill in and weeding won't be necessary.
  - Hand pulling of weeds should be sufficient.
  - Weeding will be provided by the office or it's grounds crew.
- Mulch
  - It should be coarse, double shredded hardwood or another alternative which does not easily float.
  - Approximately 3 inches should be maintained in the garden at all times.

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## Maintenance Plan: Seasonal Maintenance

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*This is namely for after the two-three year establishment period, but should still be carried out during those first two years.*

- Year-round
  - Keep drain clear and garden clean of garbage
  - Weed (except winter)
- Spring:
  - Prune dead vegetation and plants that have grown too large
  - Weed the garden and add mulch if needed
  - Remove excess sediment (i.e. leaves, sticks, debris) that may have collected over winter
  - Remove dead stalks/seed heads from previous season
  - Replenish mulch layer to maintain 3 inch layer
  - Best time to plant new/different plants and replace plants that may have died over winter
    - Plugs establish more successfully than seeds
- Summer
  - Remove weeds (i.e. crabgrass, dandelions etc.)
  - Water during dry periods (based on whether National Weather service declares drought; if no rain for one week)
  - Monitor berm around edge of garden for erosion
- Fall
  - Do not remove (too many) leaves that may have fallen into the garden – leaves will provide compost material for following spring growth; layer of leaves is fine but mounds of leaves are not
  - Remove weeds and diseased plants
  - If fall is dry continue to water until grounds begin to freeze (late October)
- Winter
  - No maintenance is needed; can cut back rain garden to clean up for spring if wanted
  - You should check to make sure garden is clean of garbage, leaves, etc. every few weeks

## Resource Contacts:

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Luke Jacobus – [lmjacobu@iupuc.edu](mailto:lmjacobu@iupuc.edu)

Barbara Hass Jacobus – [jljassja@iupuc.edu](mailto:jljassja@iupuc.edu)

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## About the Purdue Rainscaping Education Program

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The Purdue Rainscaping Education Program offers state-wide training for Purdue Master Gardeners, conservation agencies and organizations, stormwater professionals, and landscape companies and consultants.

The two day workshop sessions cover an introduction to rainscaping and rain gardens with specific modules for rain garden site selection, plant selection and garden design, installation, maintenance, and community engagement.

Workshops include hands-on activities, interactive discussions, and field trips to community rainscaping projects. Participants also gain experience through creation of a demonstration rain garden with community partners in a public space.