

Year of Recognition/Education



Trustee Andrew Przybylo and Environmental Practices Committee Chair Rosemary Palicki congratulate Chris Zalinski of Chris' Landscape for his ongoing support of the project.

The most impressive aspect of the Niles Community Rain Garden is how it has brought neighbors, businesses, schools and community groups together for a common purpose - water sustainability. Besides the countless hours of volunteers who planted thousands of native plant plugs and pulled just as many weeds, there were those businesses and community organizations that provided over \$30,000 in in-kind contributions and donations.



Niles Elementary School District 71 Culver School collaborated with Boy Scout Troop 821 and Chris' Landscape to install this rain garden at 6901 W. Oakton Street in Niles, Illinois

The most important goal of the Niles Community Rain Garden project is education. Educational material has been created that provides step-by-step instructions on how to install a rain garden at your home, businesses and school. This material also discusses the importance of native plants, rain garden habitat and water sustainability.

In the Fall of 2011, educational trail signs were installed for visitors to learn about the project and to help inspire them to build a similar project at their home, business or school.



A Monarch Butterfly visits the Niles Community Rain Garden and stops on a favorite choice of native plants - a Swamp Milkweed plant.

What Now?

The Niles Community Rain Garden and Prairie Grass project has come a long way since June 2008 and will continue to provide an educational and recreational experience for the Niles Community for years to come.

There is more to accomplish!

Future ideas for the project

- Add more native plantings;
- Collaborate with the Niles Library District and schools to develop educational opportunities;
- Install more recycled content benches ;
- Inventory existing native plants and forbs;
- Create and install individual plant level signage;
- Harvest the native plant seeds for gifts;
- Solar lighting on the pathways;
- Replace turf grass with Buffalo Grass; and
- Install two permanent foot bridges.

"The Niles Community Rain Garden is an exemplary place of accomplishment as a result of citizens, businesses, institutions and interested parties working together for a better future."

- Rosemary Palicki, Environmental Practices Committee Chair

Special Thanks

The Niles Community Rain Garden project is a reality and successful due to the hard work and expertise of the employees who serve in the Niles Water and Sewer Department.

Niles Community Rain Garden & Prairie Plant Project

A community partnership for demonstrating how to sustainably manage rainwater



Located at:

7114 W. Touhy Ave.
Niles, Illinois

In The Beginning



The Niles Community Rain Garden project began in June of 2008 as a collaboration between the Village of Niles and Coca-Cola Bottling Company in Niles. Through this public/ private partnership, the Village of Niles is now the home of what Brook McDonald of the Conservation Foundation referred to as “the largest functioning rain garden in all of Cook County.”

Some Early Facts

- The 3/4 acre rain garden site once contained two abandoned buildings.
- The Niles Community Rain Garden project was designed by Landscape Architect Phil Stuepfert of HRGreen.
- This first rain garden constructed is 1,400 square feet and contains over 560 native forbs and grasses.
- Just over 150 Coca-Cola personnel from the region participated.
- The Notre Dame High School Environmental Adventure Club maintained the rain garden during the first year.
- The project was certified in the Conservation Foundation Conservation @ Home program.
- The Niles Community Rain Garden appeared in the Conservation Foundation magazine *the Heron*.



Participation Grows

By the Spring of 2009, interest in Niles Community Rain Garden project grew with volunteers, sponsorships, and grants. The first grant to come in for the project was \$5,000 from the RBC Blue Water Project, which focuses on fostering a culture of water stewardship. Following this grant were generous donations from the Niles Lions Club, Groot Industries, ComEd, and Home Depot.

Pizzo Ecological Restoration provided free professional services by strategically placing and preparing the native plants and training volunteers how to properly plant the seedlings and plugs.

The most significant support the second year came in the form of an in-kind donation of labor and construction from Chris' Landscape - a local Niles business. The company's owner, who is also a Niles resident, spent an entire day grading the site for proper drainage and constructing 470 linear feet of pervious pathway.

The year came to an end with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) highlighting the Niles Community Rain Garden project as part of their Green Practices for Communities series.



A Year of Weeding



Thanks to volunteers from Coca-Cola, Chris' Landscape, and Village Hall, 2010 at the Niles Community Rain Garden was weedless.

Although a mature rain garden can be relatively maintenance free, it is important to weed young native plant beds as they are developing.

Since 2010, the Niles Community Rain Garden has been a popular gathering place for Arbor Day, Earth Day, and other special sustainability themed events.



Mayor Robert Callero celebrates Arbor Day with volunteers from Coca-Cola, local scouts and the Niles Lions Club.

To Date, the site contains 2,800 square feet of rain garden, 1,800 square feet of prairie grasses, and over 2,500 native forbs and grasses that absorb and naturally filter stormwater runoff from 36,000 square feet of nearby impervious surface.



Mayor Robert Callero accepts a generous donation from Coca-Cola Senior Vice President Dave Katz as the Village celebrates Earth Day and announces a free rain barrel giveaway.

Five trees native to Illinois were planted onsite. Three Pin Oaks and Two White Oaks (State Tree).