

GREEN 2020 SUMMIT, NORTHERN ILLINOIS CONFERENCE, February 29, 2020
NATIVE LANDSCAPES FOR CHURCHES AND CONGREGATIONS
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As Americans invested in the technologies of landscape creation and maintenance, we lost touch with our natural inheritances. Our lawns and properties host only a small number plant and animal species, and we beat our lawns into submission with ever-noisier and more energy-demanding mowers and blowers.

But our congregations have an important opportunity to show their communities - both their members and neighbors - that growing closer to nature will enrich our environment while we have a good time.

Outside my church sanctuary in Evanston is a modest rain garden. We used native plants, strategically placed, to keep water out of our building and the overloaded sewer system. About a dozen people volunteered to help construct the garden last spring. It covers about 200 sq.ft. And cost about \$400 for plants.

The back page of this handout lists a few places that you can visit to illustrate potential opportunities. The closest to here is in St. Charles, the largest is in Homer Glen and one of my favorites is in Lemont. It also lists organizations that you can contact to get important information for your use.

PLACES WHERE YOU CAN VISIT GREAT EXAMPLES

- CHICAGO BOTANICAL GARDEN, Glencoe – Visit the “Native Plant Garden” and the rain gardens surrounding the Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Building as the best of dozens of inspiring locations. Talk to some of the experts throughout the property.
- LEMONT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, 25 W. Custer St., Lemont – This garden solves a major problem at the church. Stormwater that had flooded across the parking lot now is contained and absorbed.
- ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD, 14610 S. Will Cook Rd., Homer Glen – This beautiful church converted its entire 10-acre landscape to natives after flooding caused major problems.
- UNITED CHURCH OF ROGERS PARK, 1545 W. Morse Ave., Chicago – There are two rain gardens here. Near the corner water is absorbed so that it doesn’t flood the bus stop area. Farther east, water is diverted away from the building so it doesn’t seep into the basement library.
- GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, 1416 South Blvd., Evanston – The 200 sq.ft. garden on the east side of the church was constructed last spring. Two blocks east of the church, on Oakton Avenue, a 900 sq.ft. garden was built by volunteers and students three years ago. The garden eliminates flooding and icing at the school bus loading area.
- ST. CHARLES PARK DISTRICT, 845 N. 2nd Ave., St. Charles – The rain garden at the north end of the Pottawatomie Community Center captures and filters contaminated stormwater running off the maintenance garage parking lot before it reaches the Fox River. Consultants had priced it at \$5,000, but it was built by volunteers at no cost by utilizing native plants and landscape features from nearby park property.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT CAN BE HELPFUL

- WILDFLOWER PRESERVATION AND PROPAGATION COMMITTEE

www.thewppc.org

They are having their annual Natural Landscape Seminar today, February 29th, from 8AM to 3:45PM at the Luecht Conference Center of McHenry County College, 8900 US Highway 14, Crystal Lake. I've gone to a couple of these and found them a wonderful place to meet knowledgeable people. They even offer mentors for groups wanting to begin using native vegetation.

- WILD ONES

Go to www.wildones.org to get your closest chapter. They have regular meetings and tours.

THE BEST ON-LINE MANUAL

- Google "Wisconsin Rain Garden Manual" and you gain access to excellent information about native vegetation and garden design.

NURSURIES THAT HAVE HELPFUL BROCHURES AND ARE SOURCES OF NATIVE PLANTS

- PRAIRIE NURSERY NATIVE PLANTS AND SEEDS

www.prairienursery.com You can go online and get their excellent catalog. They are located in Westfield, Wisconsin and so aren't easy to visit. But they ship plant orders by mail.

- TAYLOR CREEK RESTORATION NURSERY

www.restorationnurseries.com You can go online and get their excellent catalog. They are located in Brodhead, WI so aren't too far away. Retail sales are limited, so make an appointment.

- POSSIBILITY PLACE NURSERY

www.possibilityplace.com You can go online and get their catalog. Their specialty is native trees and shrubs but they also have a full range of grasses and forbs (wildflowers). They are located in Monee, IL. You will need an appointment to make a retail visit.

You can go to your favorite local nursery – they will probably have a variety of native plants. Also, there are a variety of local native plant sales in the spring. But if you are interested in obtaining enough plants for a sizable garden that will contain dozens, or hundreds, of a variety of native species, you will prefer a source that sells plugs of plants by the flat. These can be purchased for a few dollars per plant, while most local nurseries sell individual larger, showier plants that can cost considerably more.