

## September 2010 eMonitor

A Publication of the Washtenaw County  
Water Resources Commissioner's Office

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### **This Month**

#### **Up Front**

Welcome to the Community  
Partners Monthly eMonitor

#### **Topic of the Month**

Alternative  
Landscaping

#### **Tips of the Month**

Maintaining and  
Planting Rain Gardens  
Rain Barrels and  
Native Plants

#### **CPCS News**

New and Renewing  
Partners and Upcoming  
CPCS events

#### **Other Information**

Educational Materials,  
Subscription Information, and  
Staff Contact Information

#### **NEW !**

Check out our Partner  
Spotlight Section



### **Up Front**

The eMonitor is designed to keep our Partners and friends updated on the CPCS program and ways to help improve water quality. Issues covered range from stormwater management, helpful information to reduce nonpoint source and stormwater pollution, recognition of new and renewing Partners, highlighting upcoming events, and creating networking opportunities. We hope you enjoy this issue of the eMonitor. We welcome any comments and/or suggestions.

## **Alternative Landscaping**

We often spend many hours and lots of money maintaining our commercial landscapes. However, with thoughtful selection of plants and unique design, we can do our part to keep rivers clean, while more easily maintaining a beautiful and attractive outdoor landscape.

Rain gardens, rain barrels, and native plants are all examples of environmentally-friendly landscaping. Rain gardens are depressions in the landscape, designed and planted to trap, absorb, and filter stormwater runoff. Rain barrels capture runoff waters from pipes and roof drainage, storing it to be used at a later time. Landscaping with native plants that are adapted to the local climate can result in using less water, while at the same time filtering pollutants that can be contained in stormwater. Alternative landscaping practices are a great opportunity to educate your employees about stormwater management, runoff, and water quality.

This issue of the eMonitor discusses how to plant and maintain a rain garden, as well as providing tips for installing rain barrels and using native plants.



## Planting and Maintaining a Rain Garden

There are several guidelines you should follow regarding the proper way to plant and maintain your rain garden. Below are some procedures and techniques to do so.

### Design

- The rain garden depression should have a bottom that is flat like a bathtub. Dig the garden so it holds water 3-6" deep.
- Provide for a safe overflow. During a heavy rain, make sure that any overflow goes to a safe location like a lawn – not towards the house.
- Use plants adapted to wet soils, but that tolerate dry soil conditions. Rain gardens are actually dry most of the time!
- Select plants whose colors, textures and seasonal change you will enjoy. Express your creativity in the shape of the bed. Have fun!
- Plant in the cool months of the Fall or Spring for healthy plant establishment

### Tending

- Pick plants with an appropriate height to minimize the need to trim later
- Label the new plants to more easily identify intruders and to help recall what was planted a few years from now.

### Mulching

- Mulch should be placed around your garden immediately following planting.
- Natural organic mulches that gradually decompose are recommended.
- Spread mulch 1-3 inches deep throughout the garden.
- Landscape fabric is not recommended.

### Edging

- Edges are the key to low maintenance.
- Two types of edges are common:
  - Hand dug trenches
  - Plastic edging, anchored in the ground
- Trenches prevent grass from intruding and growing inside the garden

### Weeding

- Weed seeds may blow into your rain garden so it is important to do a small amount of weeding throughout the growing season to keep your garden healthy and attractive.

### Planting, Thinning, & Transplanting

- Fall is the time to move, divide, remove, or add new plants.
- After transplanting, be sure to water every other day for about 2 weeks.

### Cutting Down Stalks

- You can cut (at the base) down plants that have turned brown and died or leave them to provide food for birds in the winter season.

The Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner's Office provides technical assistance for rain gardens design and implementation. For more information, please visit our website:

<http://ewashtenaw.org/raingardens>

## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

### Horiba Instruments, Inc.

The photo to the left displays native landscaping used around the property of Horiba Instruments, Inc.

Ann Arbor, MI

The partner spotlight is chosen because of notable environmental practice that relates to the monthly topic of the eMonitor. If you would like to nominate a partner or highlight your own practices, please contact us.



## Rain Barrels

Rain barrels are another easy, great idea. They save water and are a great alternative for those tight spaces.

The water collected by the rain barrels can be stored and then used for watering plants and small landscape beds. Just another earth friendly practice that saves you money!



Westgate Shopping Center  
Ann Arbor, MI

## Native Plants and Landscaping

Native plants are those that have been growing in Michigan since the 1700's. Native plants are adapted to the local climate and environmental conditions. These plants have numerous stormwater management benefits.

There are several considerations to take into account before planting a native landscape:

- The landscape should be installed by an experienced native landscape contractor

- Develop a management and maintenance plan which looks 3-5 years after the initial planting installation. This is a critical component to ensure the success of your planting.
- Control non-native invasive species as required
- Keep in mind that installations costs for native plants can be as much as 40% less than those of traditional plantings. Plus long-term maintenance costs can be up to 50% less expensive when compared to traditional plantings.

## CPCS News

Welcome to our new partners this month and thank you to our renewing ones. Together we can make a difference to keep Washtenaw County's waterways clean!

### New Partners

IMRA America, Inc.

### Renewing Partners

Horiba Instruments Inc.	Jewel Heart
US VA Healthcare System	Howard Cooper
McNaughton & Gunn	Limno-Tech, Inc.
Ann Arbor Senior Center	Earthen Jar
Liebherr-Aerospace	YCUA
American Leak Detection	Fox Hills Golf Course
Arbor Springs Water Co.	

## Educational Materials

The Water Resources Commissioner's Office provides our educational materials and brochures at no cost to our partners. Please contact our office to place a request.

## Subscribe/Unsubscribe

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## Contact Us

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