

# Lehigh Valley Greenways Conservation Landscape SUCCESS STORY

By: Lehigh Gap Nature Center  
Lgnc.org

## Landscaping for Communities and Wildlife (2015)

### SUMMARY

Through its Landscaping for Communities and Wildlife Program, Lehigh Gap Nature Center (LGNC) has worked with partners to do an array of on-the-ground projects with private and public organizations to develop a community-based model that uses demonstration landscaping and educational programming and promotes nature-friendly practices in public and private green spaces. The Landscaping Program focuses on replacing traditional landscapes (requiring significant inputs of fossil fuels, pesticides, and fertilizers that degrade waterways and ecosystems) with well-designed native plantings benefiting public health through cleaner soil and water.



### CHALLENGE

Where there are people, there is landscaping, particularly in urban and suburban areas. The vast majority of this landscaping is with non-native species and often includes invasive plants. These same areas are often sprayed for insects, fertilized, and watered. This kind of traditional landscaping is harmful to the local ecosystem and, over the long run, the health of communities and families.

LGNC's Landscaping for Communities and Wildlife Program seeks to demonstrate and fund well-designed landscaping projects that benefit the local wildlife and ecosystems, while at the same time offering a healthier, attractive landscaping alternative for residents and communities. These conservation landscapes also create opportunities for valuable habitat for bees, butterflies, birds and other wildlife, at a time when there is great concern for the decline of species like the Monarch butterfly and pollinators (honeybees and other insects are responsible for pollinating a large segment of the food supply).

### FUNDING

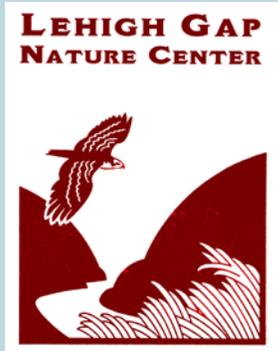
**Grant Award:**  
**\$18,000**

**Match:**  
**\$21,695**

**Total Project Cost:**  
**\$39,695**

### PARTNERSHIP IS KEY

Steering Committee partners include D&L National Heritage Corridor, Nurture Nature Center, Jacobsburg EEC, Wildlands Conservancy, Moravian, Muhlenberg and Lafayette colleges. Major funding for this project was provided by Lehigh Valley Community Foundation and an anonymous foundation.



## SOLUTION

Lehigh Gap Nature Center has worked with partners to do an array of on-the-ground projects with private and public organizations to begin to develop a community-based model that uses demonstration landscaping, educational programming, and community partnership to promote nature-friendly practices in public and private green spaces. The overall landscaping program has great potential to improve community and ecosystem health, connect citizenry back to nature, and serve as a model in the Lehigh Valley and regionally.

Our Landscaping Program is ultimately designed for middle- and low- income residents. The majority of conservation landscaping projects are installed by corporations, public gardens, and wealthy homeowners, which have resources unavailable to many. Every project we install as well as our education and outreach efforts are designed to be accessible to a broad public.

## RESULTS

Specific tasks completed under the timeline of the grant include the following:

- Produced a pocket buyer's guide for native plants for residents,
- Oversaw the installation and completion of 12 conservation landscaping projects,
- Monitored all on-the-ground projects after installation (including three visits per year to all projects, post installation),
- Organized five workshops;
- Created interpretive signs and other materials specific to each project,
- Continued to develop a resource database of all projects,
- Continued to build and document the community model for conservation landscaping,

As LGNC begins to develop a Program plan for residential engagement in 2017 and 2018, we are working with the Lehigh Valley Chapter of the Penn State Extension Master Gardener Program to survey the general public about their interest in and knowledge of native plants. This work builds on a Fall 2015 Muhlenberg College class study of community engagement with our program. As we move forward, our intent is to engage people more readily in conservation landscaping by tapping into this existing community networks. LGNC is also in the process of developing landscape design templates for homeowners that will feature typical landscaping situations for small to medium households and an array of attractive, affordable, eco-friendly solutions to common landscaping practices.

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