

Lehigh Valley Greenways Conservation Landscape SUCCESS STORY

By: Lehigh Gap Nature Center
www.lgnc.org, 610-760-8889

Landscaping for Communities and Wildlife (2013)

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.



FUNDING

Grant Award:
\$15,000

Match:
\$25,000.00

Total Project Cost:
\$43,000.00

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.

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).



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:

- Formed steering committee and plans to develop community model from results of program work.
- Delivered 8 highly visible projects, including one that encompassed 21 residential gardens.
- Planted upwards of 2,000 native plants in these gardens, including approximately 200 individuals of various rare Pennsylvania plants.
- Designed and delivered two workshops, that were attended by more than 100 residential property owners and collaborated with Nurture Nature Center on a third workshop. Each of these workshop participants received coupons for purchase of native plants, resulting in approximately 200 plants being purchased directly with our vouchers, and likely at least 3 or 4 times that many additional plants purchased with the residents own funds.
- Finally, educational signage was installed at one project and is being designed for three more.

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