

Lehigh Valley Greenways Conservation Landscape SUCCESS STORY

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Gardening a Greener Future in Easton (Awarded 2020)

SUMMARY

In PA, a changing climate means more heavy precipitation events and higher risk of devastating stormwater runoff in urban communities. Nurture Nature Center sought to provide more education on climate change adaptation and strategies to the Easton community, focusing on green spaces and infrastructure to reduce runoff. NNC redesigned its Urban Recycle Garden to better mitigate the impact of heavy precipitation events and to serve as a demonstration site for effective stormwater management. Interpretative signage educates about how native species, rain barrels, and certain types of ground cover can manage increased runoff. NNC held a virtual rain barrel workshop and distributed 50 kits to residents. A virtual garden tour was created to showcase the community green spaces, such as pocket parks, and community and backyard gardens, that are contributing to a greener future in Easton.

FUNDING

Grant Award:
\$4,292

Match:
\$7,862

Total Project Cost:
\$12,153

PARTNERSHIP IS KEY

Watershed Coalition of the Lehigh Valley and Penn State Extension Master Watershed Steward Program helped run the rain barrel workshop, and provided volunteers to implement the garden redesign, along with planning and planting a bioswale. This project would not have been possible without our partners.



NNC's Garden Director Pam Ruch and Master Watershed Steward volunteers after planting a bioswale at the garden



The welcome sign for the redesigned Urban Recycle Garden

CHALLENGE

As average temperatures increase, areas in Pennsylvania are projected to experience an increase in heavy precipitation events, which together with increased urbanization and impervious surfaces, leads to a higher risk of stormwater runoff impacts. Nurture Nature Center experienced this firsthand when water infiltrated its downtown building after recent heavy rain events. With an Urban Recycle Garden in the back of its building, a chance to recreate the garden with effective stormwater management practices in mind developed. NNC saw an opportunity to not only solve its runoff issues but to also educate the community about ways to mitigate runoff and to celebrate the green spaces throughout the community already contributing to a greener future for Easton. NNC aimed to create a demonstration site with its garden (while also providing free food to the community), as well as provide inspiration and information to others looking to make their own backyard spaces better able to handle and mitigate increased precipitation and runoff.



SOLUTION

Gardening a Greener Future met the challenge of educating about the need for climate change adaptation and solutions related to stormwater runoff and providing demonstrations of effective stormwater management by: creating a redesigned Urban Recycle Garden at NNC with educational signage about ways to better manage excess water; hosting a rain barrel workshop that discussed the need for and benefit of rain barrels while also providing free rain barrel kits to participants; and developing a virtual story map tour of the community to highlight green spaces, such as pocket parks, community gardens, backyard spaces, and the microforest, and the ways these spaces contribute to climate change adaptation and effective stormwater management.

RESULTS

The Gardening a Greener Future project was highly successful given the limitations the COVID-19 pandemic caused. Despite being unable to host in-person workshops and walking tours, NNC was able to host a virtual rain barrel workshop and distribute 50 free rain barrel kits to members of the community. The redesign of the Urban Recycle Garden was completed with the help of the Watershed Coalition of the Lehigh Valley and the Penn State Master Watershed Steward Program volunteers. Importantly, NNC was able to interview several community members about green spaces throughout Easton including pocket parks, community gardens, and neighbors' backyard spaces and highlight these inspiring examples through a virtual garden tour available at <https://arccg.is/9vauX> and on NNC's website <https://nurturenaturecenter.org/news/gardening-a-greener-future-virtual-tour/>. The tour was shared on social media (Facebook and Instagram) and received lots of positive feedback with people making comments like "I loved your video of your awesome space within the city." This tour will be a permanent feature on NNC's website and NNC will continue to encourage everyone to visit the Urban Recycle Garden to learn more about effective stormwater management under a changing climate.

Contact



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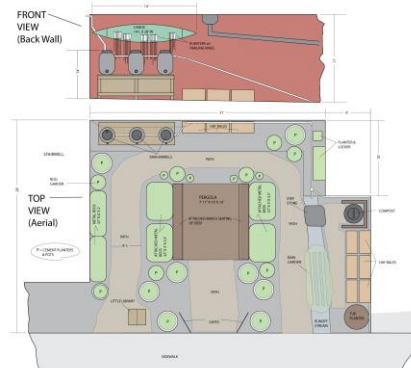
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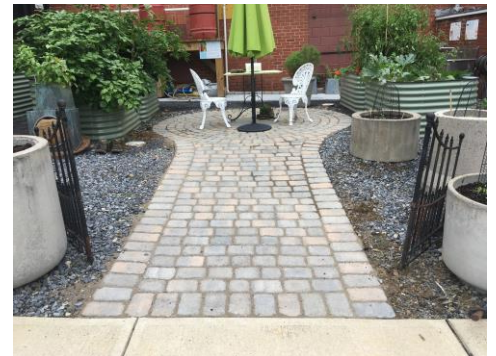
NNC Urban Garden Redesign Plan



"During" picture with new rain barrel system, pavers, and raised metal beds for planting



New interpretative signs at the redesigned garden



Center of the garden