Rain Gardens are a Growing Trend

by Peg Van Patten

Rain Gardens are really catching on—especially since the Connecticut NEMO program and its collaborators have offered training for landscapers, designers, maintenance care providers and volunteers.

What are they? Rain gardens are depressions in the landscape with plantings which are designed to capture stormwater runoff from roofs, roads, and compacted soils. The water is collected, then allowed to absorb into the soil. The result is less pollution to Long Island Sound and local waterways, and some of the water is used to nourish a lovely collection of native plants.

Those who come for the training have a first-hand experience by helping to create an actual rain garden. Mike Dietz, Connecticut NEMO coordinator and Connecticut Sea Grant Extension educator, leads the rain garden training. The training usually takes a day and a half. A development grant from Connecticut Sea Grant recently provided funds for rain garden design, materials, and installation for a demonstration garden at the Kelly Middle School in Norwich, Connecticut.

The experience is not complete when the garden installation is, because the trainees leave with the knowledge to create similar gardens for their own homes, businesses, or municipalities.

Soon, the program plans to offer a smart phone app to help users plan their rain gardens. David Dickson and Dietz, who are working on it, say the app will be available in the fall of 2012. It will assist users in selecting a proper site, sizing the garden, and selecting plants.

For more about the rain garden program, visit http://nemo.uconn.edu/raingardens or contact michael.dietz@uconn.edu.