COUNTY OF BERRIEN
OFFICE OF THE DRAIN COMMISSIONER
CHRISTOPHER J QUATTRIN

Berrien County Administration Center – 701 Main Street – St. Joseph, MI 49085-1316
Telephone: 269/983-7111, Ext. 8261 – Fax: 269/982-8658

Keep It Blue – Go Native

Berrien County Drain Commissioner's Native Garden Project

Protecting Water Quality, One Native Garden at a Time

Introduction:

Keep It Blue – Go Native is a grant program that helps offset costs associated with the installation and maintenance of new and existing native gardens on Berrien County School campuses (K-12). Grant awards are $500 toward each garden, and can be applied to rain gardens, native wetland landscaping/riparian zones, prairie gardens, upland bird/butterfly and pollinator gardens or green roofs. Native gardens installed peripheral to school food gardens also qualify. A native garden that is funded by this grant will help others learn about native spaces and how native gardens help improve water quality. We hope to encourage people to create their own native gardens on residential and commercial properties. Therefore, grant recipients must agree to the following educational efforts:

Promote the Keep It Blue – Go Native garden project by allowing the Berrien County Drain Commissioner to:

- Photo document your garden at various stages that may include before, during, and immediately after installation, as well as subsequent years to monitor its progress.
- Allow the native garden details and photos to be published on Berrien County Drain Commissioner's website (https://www.berriencounty.org/DrainCommissioner), Facebook, and other publications. Place a Keep It Blue – Go Native sign in the garden as provided by the Drain Commissioner.

Applications and Project Awards:

First-year applications will be accepted through February 15, 2018 for projects to be installed in the spring 2018 growing season. Award presentations will be delivered by April 15, 2018.

Applications for projects to be installed in autumn 2018 (late dormant planting season) will be accepted through August 1, 2018. Award presentations will be delivered by September 15, 2018. All first-year awards will be planning grant awards. In following years, awards will be a combination of planning and established garden grants.

Projects must be installed in the spring 2018 growing season or late 2018 (dormant planting season).

The process includes:

1. A review of the submitted native garden application.
2. A site visit to determine if the proposed location is suitable for the proposed garden.

3. For those sites deemed appropriate, the Drain Commissioner will provide an agreement form outlining the conditions of the award. Once the agreement form is returned, with the Principal's and Superintendent's signatures, the Drain Commissioner will notify you with the counter-signed agreement and project coordination may begin.

Eligibility:

The following criteria are the minimum eligibility standards that must be met for the application to be considered:

1. The proposed project is within Berrien County limits and will be located on a Public School Campus (K-12).
2. The native garden is designed and constructed in a way that will reduce stormwater runoff and improve water quality (including improved interception in buffer zones and infiltration).
3. Michigan native plants (and their cultivars with approval) are primarily to be used in the native garden. Under no circumstances will invasive plant species be allowed. Refer to: www.habitatmatters.org/uploads/9/5/0/6/95066352/invasive_ornamental_plants_gbb_update. pdf for a list of prohibited species. In an appropriate design, non-native plants may sparingly be used to create structure or to suite design purposes, but native plants must comprise 90%+ of the vegetative mix.

The following criteria will be utilized to evaluate the applications:

1. Ability to help address localized stormwater issues or improve infiltration.
2. Amount of impervious surface area treated (rain garden/bio-swale designs).
3. Creativity of design and application of appropriate design basics.
4. Habitat improvement for native animal species including birds, butterflies and other native pollinators.
5. Diversity of plant species and degree to which native plants and their cultivars are used.
6. Presence or absence of other stormwater treatment best management practices serving the location.
7. Other unique features as presented by the applicant.

Eligible Expenses:

The following items are eligible costs:

1. Native perennial plants, seeds, or native cultivars (as approved).
2. Shredded hardwood mulch.
3. Soil amendments.
4. Materials to connect the impervious area runoff to the rain garden.
5. Equipment rental costs.

Do not begin your project until receipt of a counter-signed agreement from the Drain Commissioner.

An itemized list of donated materials and their value will need to be provided as well as the number of hours of labor (documented in the activity log) at the conclusion of the project for planning grants and as part of grants for existing gardens.

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Native Garden Project Application:

Please submit pages 3 – 6. You may submit electronically or a printed copy. Remember to keep a copy for your files.

Please submit your complete application to:
Jacqueline Blackwell
OR
Jacqueline Blackwell
Berrien County Drain Office
Administrative Assistant
Berrien County Administration Center
701 Main Street St. Joseph, MI 49085

1. Name of applicant: _____
2. Applicant's address: _____
3. Address of proposed rain garden: (if different from applicant's address) (must be within Berrien County and on a Public School property.

   _____
4. Applicant's daytime phone number: _____
5. Applicant's email: _____
6. Explain why you think your site would be a good location for a rain garden (including any current stormwater issues on your property).

7. Native gardens need weeding, watering (during installation year and drought), and mulching to preserve their health and function. At a minimum, you will need to cut or pull dead vegetation each SPRING and weed it 2 to 3 times per growing season. Check which box indicates your maintenance plan, preference will be given to projects that involve students:

   ☐ Student maintained ☐ Maintenance staff

8. Does the proposed location meet the following criteria? (Check box if yes.)

   ☐ Garden is at least 10' from buildings, including those on neighboring properties.

   ☐ Garden is not over underground utilities (electric, phone, cable, storm sewer, sanitary sewer, water) – Must call Miss Dig before construction (**1-800-482-7171)**!

   ☐ Garden is not over a septic system.

9. What impervious surfaces do you plan to capture runoff from? (Check all that apply.)

   ☐ School roof.

   ☐ Garage/Shed roof.

   ☐ Driveway/parking lot.

   ☐ Walkway or patio.

   ☐ Playground.

10. What type of garden are you installing? (Check all that apply.)

   ☐ Rain Garden.

   ☐ Bird/Butterfly or Pollinator Garden.

   ☐ Wetland Landscaping/Riparian Buffer Zone.

   ☐ Bio-swale.

   ☐ Prairie.

   ☐ Green Roof.

Please sketch your proposed native garden plan below (or attach a separate sheet) giving approximate dimensions, showing its relationship to your school and street, property lines, etc. Sketches must include the distance from all buildings, including those on neighboring properties that are near the proposed native garden.

Provide a list of plant species and materials. Please include sources (including rock path-retaining materials and mulch).

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Design and/or installation of your native garden must include students, but you may partner or involve a professional mentor to help! Please contact us for a list of local mentors who have volunteered their professional services. Please be sure they **understand the principles of native and rain garden construction**.

Online resources to assist you and your mentor with native garden design and installation include:

- Wildflower Association of Michigan
  http://www.wildflowersmich.org/index.php?menu=8
- Michigan Wildflower Farm – Seed source if you are seeding as part of your garden
  http://www.michiganwildflowerfarm.com/
- Rain Gardens in Washtenaw County
  http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/drain_commissioner/dc_webWaterQuality/rain-gardens
- Realize Rain Gardens Rochester Website
  www.rochesterstormwater.com/rrr
- Blue Thumb: Planting for Clean Water
  www.bluethumb.org
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
  https://www.epa.gov/soakuptherain/rain-gardens
- Maplewood, MN Rainwater Gardens Website
  www.ci.maplewood.mn.us/index.asp?NID=1034
- Tipp of the Mitt Watershed Council
  https://www.watershedcouncil.org/project-rain-garden.html
- University of Wisconsin Extension Raingarden How-To Manual for Homeowners
  http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs
- The Rain Garden Network
  www.raingardennetwork.com
- This Old House: How to Build a Rain Garden to Filter Run-off
  www.thisoldhouse.com/how-to/how-to-build-rain-garden-to-filter-run
- Three Rivers Rain Garden Alliance
  www.raingardenalliance.org
- Michigan DNR
  http://www.michigandnr.com/publications/pdfs/huntingwildlifehabitat/Landowners_Guide/Habitat_Mgmt/Backyard/Special_Gardens.htm

Information about **Michigan Native Plants**

Michigan Native Plant Producers Association

Providing nursery-grown native plants and seed from Michigan genotypes!
www.mnppa.org

What are Michigan native plants?
Plant species that occurred in Michigan prior to European settlement. The University of Michigan Herbarium plant database, michiganflora.net, can be used to determine if a species is native or not.

Why native plants?

Native plants have several characteristics that make them appealing as garden and landscaping plants.

They are naturally adapted to the soils and weather conditions of the area, so they need little care once they've become established. If they're planted in the proper location, they do not need fertilization, irrigation, or winter protection. When used in place of lawn, they decrease the time and expense required for repeated mowing.

They provide food and cover for wildlife. Native plants attract butterflies, dragonflies, birds, and a host of other creatures that provide movement and interest to a garden. Landscapes containing native plants can help offset the dramatic loss of habitat resulting from rapid development.

They improve the quality of the environment by slowing stormwater runoff, preventing erosion, and enriching the soil. The deep roots of native plants provide a path for water to seep into the ground, thereby preventing runoff from speeding overland, taking soil with it. Also, the use of native plants in landscapes can reduce the air and noise pollution created by mowers and other yard equipment, the water pollution caused by fertilizers and pesticides, and the loss of natural areas by invasions of alien plants that have escaped from traditional gardens.

Native plants can be found for every type of environment, from dry and sunny to soggy and shady. With their variety of colors, heights, foliage, and bloom times, they add beauty and interest to any landscape.

Note: There are many other nurseries that offer Michigan native plants, but not all of them grow them from Michigan seed sources. If you cannot obtain native plants grown from Michigan seed, then the next best option are plants grown as close to Michigan as possible. These plants will share more genetics with their Upper Midwest counterparts and be more adapted to our climate, offer more wildlife value, and be more resistant to pests and disease in our area.

Cultivars (selectively bred) of Michigan native plants may be acceptable planting options within native gardens, as they are readily accessible (they can be found at most nurseries). However, to learn more about why non-cultivars of native species are a *BETTER* choice in most cases, refer to:
www.wildones.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Nativars-Statement.pdf

Glossary

Native Plant – a plant that had occurred naturally in a particular region, ecosystem, or habitat, before European settlers came, without direct or indirect human intervention.

Storm water – surface water runoff resulting from rain or snow.

Riparian – the area alongside a stream, including the bank of a stream and the vegetation of the flood plain; also a transition between the stream and the watershed surrounding it.

Buffer Zone – an area of permanent vegetation that will filter out pollution before it reaches the stream, usually 10-50 feet deep.

Prairie – a large open area of native grassland and flowers, without many trees.

Rain Garden – is a depression in the ground or a hole where plants are planted that collect rain water runoff from impervious urban areas, like roofs, driveways, walkways, and parking lots. The plants help to both absorb the water and help the water move down into the ground.

Bio-swale – landscaping designed to collect or remove silt and pollution from surface runoff water generally along a road or property. They consist of a curvy drainage course with gently sloped sides and filled with native plants, compost and/or loose stone.

Cultivar – a plant variety that is not native. People have modified or improved the plant in some way (selective-breeding).

Infiltration – water being absorbed by the soil and moved down toward shallow and deep aquifers (areas of water storage beneath the surface).

Impervious Surface – a surface that does not absorb water, such as a parking lot, roof or road.

Pollinator Garden – a garden that is planted predominately with native flowers that provide high quality nectar or pollen for a wide range of pollinating insects.