

UM Master Gardeners are on a roll

On Wednesday, April 18, 36 Master Gardeners from Washington County squeezed into the nature center at Inspiration in Bayport to learn about raingardens and the Blue Thumb - Planting for Clean Water Program. Shawn Tracy from the Metro Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts discussed the details of planning and creating raingardens for residential properties, including where to place gardens, what size to make them and how to test soil types and infiltration rates. At the workshop, Jyneen Thatcher of the Washington Conservation District also spoke about how to recognize wetlands and where to site raingardens so that they do not become water gardens.

Armed with information, the Washington County Master Gardeners are now ready to take the message of planting for clean water to the public. They have already scheduled one workshop, "Designing a Raingarden" to be taught at the Washington County Fairgrounds on Tuesday, May 8 from 6:30-8:30pm, and they have plans to offer more workshops during the summer at the new South Service Center in Cottage Grove. A group of master gardeners will also help to plant the new raingarden at Lakeland City Hall.

During the course of the summer, we will continue to work with the master gardeners to develop further educational opportunities such as a "Raingarden Kit" for sale during the annual summer plant sale or maintenance mentoring for new raingarden owners.

The nature education center at Inspiration in Bayport was the perfect setting for a raingarden workshop.



Enjoying the scenic St. Croix River Bluffs



Eight people and two canine companions enjoyed a sunny evening at St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park.

The day dawned foggy, but by evening there was nothing but sun and blue sky as eight hikers and two dogs embarked on a leisurely tour of St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park in Denmark Township. Along the way we spotted several woodland flowers in bloom, including purple, white and yellow wood violets, merrybells and rue anemone. We also swapped advice on how to eradicate invasive buckthorn from yards and nearby parks. After making a three-mile loop along a wooded trail, we headed down to the boat landing to watch the fading light over the St. Croix River.

The next Tuesday night hike is scheduled for June 5, 6-8pm at Pine Point Regional Park in Stillwater Township. RSVP to Angie Hong at algoodri@hotmail.com or 952-261-9599.



NEMO Coordinator Hired

After months of planning and searching, Northland NEMO (Non-point Source Education for Municipal Officials) has finally hired a coordinator for the Twin Cities metro area. John Bilotta, who has worked for U of M Extension in Carver County for the past eight years, will coordinate NEMO workshops for the metro area and will be the primary contact for NEMO projects in greater Minnesota as well. John's position is funded by the Met Council and League of Minnesota Cities and will be housed out of the U of M Extension office in Farmington. We will be working with John to develop trainings and workshops for elected officials in Washington County.

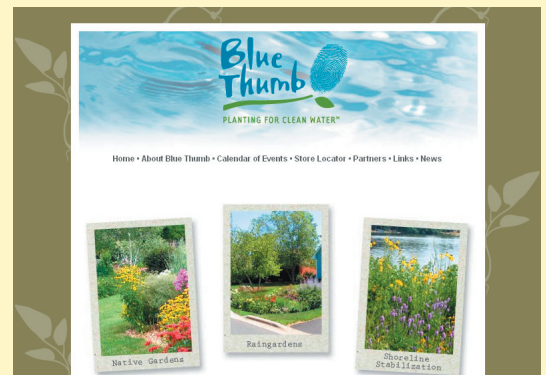
Erosion Control Workshop coming soon...

As a follow-up to the Stormwater U workshop that targeted designers and engineers in the east metro, we are hoping to schedule an erosion control field session for builders and contractors early this summer. The outdoor workshop will most likely take place at a new development in Woodbury and will be coordinated with MECA (Minnesota Erosion Control Association). At the workshop, people will learn how to install inlets, hydroseed with compost, build mulch berms, establish temporary slope drains and much, much more.



Have you seen the new Blue Thumb website?

The Blue Thumb - Planting for Clean Water website www.BlueThumb.org is now a stand-alone website with a fresh new look. The new website has the same features as the old one, including a native plant selector tool and links to raingarden and shoreline resources, as well as some new features, such as a map to local Blue Thumb nurseries and a page listing current Blue Thumb partners. During the next few months, the Blue Thumb partners group will continue working on improvements for the website, including information about local cost-share programs, photos of plants in the selector tool and enhanced descriptions of the program.



The Blue Thumb website www.BlueThumb.org has a new snazzy look.

Spreading the word

The word is getting out about Blue Thumb - Planting for Clean Water and the role that homeowners can play in improving local lakes and rivers. In April, I spoke at the Legend's neighborhood association annual meeting in Stillwater, gave a raingarden talk to the St. Croix chapter of Wild Ones, and manned a table at the Cottage Grove Arbor Day event. There have also been a number of articles about Blue Thumb, rain barrels, native plants and trees in the Washington County newsletter, city newsletters and local papers. As a result, my phone has been ringing with people interested in starting their own raingardens and improving their home landscaping. Things are going good!

Members of the East Metro Water Resource Education Program:

Brown's Creek Watershed District • City of Dellwood • City of Forest Lake • City of Stillwater • City of Willernie • Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization • South Washington Watershed District • Valley Branch Watershed District • Washington Conservation District • Washington County

