

Community Rain Gardens Project – 2015

The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance (GEAA) will work with Homeowners' Associations (HOA's), school districts, colleges and universities, local governments and regulatory agencies to create Community Rain Gardens on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. These projects will engage participants through a series of presentations, planning exercises, and project implementation. Homeowners and students will learn how to maintain existing stormwater filtration systems, and will participate in installing Low Impact Development (LID) features such as swales, rain gardens, and site specific plantings to enhance filtration of stormwater before it enters the Aquifer. Landscape architects with expertise in LID will be employed to design Gardens and direct homeowners to properly install and maintain LID enhancements.

GEAA will collaborate with city council representatives from the districts that contain portions of the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone for outreach to HOA's. GEAA will meet with HOA's to present information about the Community Rain Gardens program, determine appropriate sites for LID enhancements, and plan the projects.

Volunteers from the HOA's and schools will provide "sweat equity" for the creation and planting of the Community Rain Gardens projects, which will involve laying the underdrains, backfilling soil, and planting under the direction of trained professionals. Each event will be staged for one or two days work days, depending upon the complexity of the project. Heavy equipment will be operated by paid staff in advance of volunteer activities. Additional volunteer assistance will be sought from local organizations, including the Native Plant Society of Texas, Master Gardeners, Boy and Girl Scouts, and local businesses. We expect participation of 20 to 30 volunteers for each project. GEAA staff will follow up with the volunteers on a weekly basis to ensure that the Rain Gardens are being properly maintained. Volunteer organizations and funders will be acknowledged in interpretive signage at each site.

GEAA will collaborate with school districts on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone to install one Community Rain Garden and an outdoor Aquifer Learning Lab. A curriculum will be developed to educate students about the functioning of the Edwards Aquifer, and how these Gardens will enhance that function. GEAA will use the Garden and Aquifer Learning lab to conduct classes for students from all school districts. The Landscape Architect will work with grounds keeping staff to ensure proper maintenance.

The Architecture and Civil Engineering departments of UTSA will plan and install one LID enhancement project on campus. Students of the Engineering and Environmental Sciences departments will assist in water quality monitoring. GEAA will design curriculum in collaboration with professors and will work with staff to insure maintenance.

This project has the potential to affect all citizens of San Antonio and the surrounding communities and will benefit 2.5 million individuals in the San Antonio Metropolitan Area who rely on the Edwards Aquifer as their primary source of potable water. San Antonio is unique as one of the largest cities in the world to enjoy artesian water so pure that no treatment is required prior to distribution. We aim to preserve water quality for the enjoyment of all citizens and future generations. Also worthy of preservation are recreational water quality standards for Comal, Hueco, and San Marcos springs, among the largest springs in the State, which generate a vibrant local economy.