

Welcome to the Wall Township Environmental Advisory Committee environmental newsletter. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.



Environmentally Yours

Wall Township Environmental Advisory Committee

Volume 4

Gardening

<http://wallnj.com/323/Environmental-Advisory-Committee>

Many of you have cabin fever and are a little tired of being homebound by the Coronavirus. Why not leave your indoor home and head for the outdoors in your front or back yard. Let's get away from technology and get our hands dirty and have fun in preparing a well-planned garden. Now could be a good time to think about starting a native, vegetable, flower, or rain garden. Think about the peace, tranquility, and serenity and the wonderful psychological effects of planning and growing your own garden. The Wall Township Environmental Advisory Committee has a small rain garden on Baileys Corner and Ocean Roads.

RAIN GARDEN: The purpose of the Rain Garden is to reduce the amount of rainwater that flows untreated into the streets which ultimately pollutes our waterways. Essentially, the water in a rain garden is recaptured in a shallow depression and naturally seeps into the ground; thus, avoiding impervious surfaces that create pollutants. The benefits of rain gardens is to filter runoff pollution and recharge local groundwater as well as conserve water and improve water quality by protecting our rivers and streams. Remove standing water in your yard to reduce mosquito breeding. Also, increase beneficial insects that eliminate pest insects. A rain garden may reduce the potential of home flooding. Other benefits include creating a habitat for birds and butterflies. Also, native plants may survive drought seasons and will reduce garden maintenance. In addition, a native garden will enhance sidewalk appeal and increase garden enjoyment. Our site has good drainage and sunlight for native plants. Moreover, the rain garden can capture and reuse the rain water before it reaches the impervious surface of the road.

NATIVE GARDEN: Our Environmental Committee (WTEAC) has a native garden; the Allenwood Park Native Garden located at the corner of Ramshorn Road. **WHY NATIVE PLANTS?** Native plants were found in our area before Europeans settled (when extensive land clearing began and exotic plants were first introduced from overseas). Hundreds, if not thousands, of plants fall into this category. Many are very beautiful and are underused in our landscape. Native plants have been growing and evolving in our area for thousands of years and, as a result, have adapted to the local soils and climate. As a result they are more likely to thrive with minimal care than exotic plants. This can mean less water, fertilizer and pesticides. Also, native plants are less likely to create environmental havoc should they "escape" from your garden, unlike aggressive exotics which can become invasive plants.

Native plants have evolved so that they have an integral place in our local ecosystem. Other plants, animals, and/or insects may require them for habitat or nutrients during all or parts of their life cycle. When natural areas are lost or cut into pieces or harmed in other ways from our activities, what's left becomes all the more critical for the survival of many species. By using native plants we can help offset the losses. By using a greater variety of species, you will have more varied season interest (flowers, berries, leaf colors, etc.) and you will encourage a more balanced population of beneficial insects that will help keep the harmful ones in check. You will also attract more birds and butterflies to your yard. Of course, not every native plant will thrive in every location. It's important to know your site conditions and the requirements of the native plants when making a selection. Finally, native plants provide that "sense of place." In a world that is fast becoming homogenized, it's nice to experience a place that is unique. By using native plants, especially those that only grow in your area; you help to foster that uniqueness.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF A NATIVE GARDEN: The benefits of our native garden using native plants are the avoidance of excess use of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides that are harmful to the environment in this municipality and the Manasquan Watershed area. Other benefits include using less or no fertilizers and pesticides. Our native garden is pesticide free. Also, we can save money, time, and energy. Moreover, less watering and less maintenance will be required. These native plants will provide shelter and food for wildlife. The Native Garden will attract and nourish wildlife; notably, birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. Wildlife can help to control annoying bugs and insects. A native garden will also be conserving our natural resources by avoiding non-point pollution and runoff particularly to the Manasquan River at our garden location.

LET'S GET STARTED ON A NATIVE GARDEN OF YOUR OWN



GETTING STARTED! Have your soil tested. Is your garden area shady or sunny? Is the soil dry or damp? How much sand, silt, and clay are in the soil? Is your soil well drained? Is it a windy site? Knowing these answers will help you pick thriving plants for your yard or garden. The Allenwood Native Garden was tested by the Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Soil Testing Laboratory in Milltown, New Jersey. The soil was found to be loamy sand and strongly acidic. Google the Internet for designs for your garden plan and further beginner information. Define your needs regarding your lawn, trees, shrubs, and ground covers.

Visit your local native landscaper for site preparation and for a final selection of plant varieties. Remember, you are selecting native plants because they require less fertilizers and pesticides. A high use of chemicals may result in contamination and potential health problems. Long term use of pesticides may lead to cancer and other possible problems if not used cautiously. Revisit the benefits of native gardens that lower costs, require less maintenance, and uses minimal watering which should be an incentive for native planting.

A FEW TIPS ON VEGETABLE OR FLOWER GARDENS – Perhaps you may like veggies like tomatoes or peppers for canning and freezing. You may want a raised or ground garden. Find the right location for sunlight and ensure that your garden is in a well-drained area. Don't forget to place your garden near a good water source. Know your size and layout of the garden before you begin. You also want to make sure you purchase the correct tools before planting. Above all, research the Internet for planting techniques for beginners and watch videos demonstrating how to plant a vegetable garden. Enjoy your garden whether a rain, native, vegetable, or flower garden. It is great to be outdoors while we are going into nicer weather. There is one last tip for all "Wall Township Living" gardeners. Be prepared for weeding and maintenance which is the biggest task of all.

Good luck.
Stay safe and well!

Environmentally Yours,
Wilma Morrissey, WTEAC Chair