

Title: RappFLOW Creates Rain Garden at The Link
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There's a new method for cleaning up stormwater at The Link in Sperryville. The rain garden is located on the eastern end of the Old School House building on Route 211. Under a grant from the Virginia Department of Forestry and with matching funds and volunteer labor from RappFLOW (Rappahannock Friends and Lovers of Our Watershed) the rain garden has taken shape over the past year. The garden performs a dual role: it filters pollutants picked up when stormwater flows across the parking lot and it helps to maintain the hydrologic balance of the area by slowing the stormwater and giving it a chance to absorb into the soil, adding to our groundwater supply rather than rushing away downstream in the Thornton River.

A "rain garden" is just what it sounds like: a specially designed garden area created to capture and filter rainwater that runs off from hard surfaces such as parking lots, roads, driveways and rooftops. The Link's parking area, at about 27,000 square feet, is the largest paved parking area in the county. Water flowing unimpeded across its paved surface ends up in the nearby Thornton River, laden with whatever trash and pollutants that may happen to be in the parking area. The new rain garden is designed and positioned to catch and hold the first half-inch of stormwater. This is because research has shown that this critical first half-inch of water will contain the bulk of the pollutants.

Because it receives a large quantity of water, the new rain garden is nearly fifty feet in diameter but any business or individual can build a garden suitably sized to accommodate specific drainage needs. With a few facts and tips, anyone can plan and construct an attractive well-functioning rain garden.

The new rain garden is planted with native shrubs, plants and trees that will thrive locally and survive brief periods of standing water. When mature, the native plants will attract birds, butterflies and other native wildlife which depends upon them. At 9:00 a.m. on the morning of September 13th, RappLOW volunteers will be out putting the finishing touches on the garden. County residents are invited to stop by and take a look.

At RappFLOW's regular monthly meeting at 6:30 pm on September 18th in the conference room at The Link, a presentation will be given for anyone interested in building a rain garden or simply understanding how they work. Detailed printed information from a variety of organizations will be available at no charge. Additional information will soon be available at the rain garden site itself.

For further information, please contact the President of RappFLOW, BJ Valentine at (540) 675-3949 or email bvalenti@vt.edu.