

From eyesore to enchanting: neighbors make a difference for water

On a recent summer evening in northeast Minneapolis, a dozen people in garden gloves gathered to weed and plant a four-block stretch of blooming raingardens. Butterflies and bees joined the pollinator-friendly party. Neighbors nearby came out to chat.

Just a few summers ago, this spot was an eyesore. Diseased trees that once graced the medians had been removed and the city dug swales to plant, but after a year of neglect the site became weedy and unsightly.

Thanks to Linnea Goderstad and a project partner the quarter-acre of raingardens is now a lush and beautiful community amenity that provides a haven for pollinators and a great way for residents to connect and volunteer. Their work on the site was part of their training to become certified Master Water Stewards (MWS).

MWS training includes 50 hours and concludes with a capstone project designed and implemented by stewards. Linnea knew that becoming a MWS was a commitment – one that she was ready to embrace. Her project required her to make connections with the city,

the local watershed district, neighborhood organizations, and other agencies.

Linnea and her project partner planted the swales with pollinator-friendly native perennials whose deep roots help soak lots of rainwater into the ground. The swales were a natural fit for the raingardens they created. “It was a great opportunity to put something beautiful in the medians that would also be environmentally friendly,” said Linnea. “And I thought such a public and visible project would be a really great outreach piece as well.”

Encouraged by the neighborhood response, next year Linnea hopes to add a community social component to the volunteer events, to engage even more people in the project and provide a venue for people to talk more in-depth about water issues. “This project has given me the opportunity to talk to a lot of neighbors about water quality and garden and lawn care best practices,” she said. “You bring people in little by little.”



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