



A Newsletter for the Black River Watershed Project

May 2007

9th Edition

WHERE IS THE BLACK RIVER WATERSHED?

The watershed encompasses 287 square miles in Allegan and Van Buren Counties. The Black River has three main branches: the North, Middle and South. These three branches converge and flow into Lake Michigan at South Haven.

The Black River Watershed includes portions of Arlington, Bangor, Bloomingdale, Casco, Cheshire, Clyde, Columbia, Covert, Ganges, Geneva, Lee, South Haven, and Waverly Townships, as well as the Villages of Bloomingdale and Breedsville, and the Cities of Bangor and South Haven.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

What's New	1
Equipment Rental	1
Raingardens	2
Native Plant Sale	3
Land Conservation in the Black River Watershed	3
Only Rain Down the Storm Drain	3
Upcoming Events	4

WHAT'S NEW

Workshops

The Van Buren Conservation District, and the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission have hosted a variety of workshops for the Black and Paw Paw River Watershed Projects over the past several months, including Landscaping for Water Quality,

Filling the Gaps, Low Impact Development, and Wetlands 101.

We've had great attendance and very positive

comments on these programs. Look for more workshops in the future (see page 4 for upcoming

events), and let us know if there's a topic you'd like to see featured.

Land Use Planning

The Black River Watershed Project has grant money available to help four communities in the watershed with long term land use

planning.

Communities are applying to the Van Buren Conservation District for this assistance.

These

communities will receive a master plan and zoning ordinance review and update that promotes protection of

natural resources. Land use planning tools will be developed in these four communities that can be utilized by additional communities in the future.

Bangor Riverfront

Lion's Park in Bangor is undergoing a transformation, thanks to funding from the City of Bangor, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, and the Black River Watershed Project. Streambanks have been stabilized and planted with native vegetation, raingardens are being installed, walking trails are in place, and there's a new canoe/kayak launch. Work continues on the project, but the site will soon be a great demonstration of several different techniques that landowners can use to protect and improve water quality.



Workshop participants discuss Low Impact Development techniques, April 2007

DISCOUNT ON EQUIPMENT RENTALS

The Van Buren Conservation District has farm equipment for rent, including a Brillion Seeder and a John Deere No-till Drill.

Residents of the Black River Watershed receive a **33% discount** on the rental fee if the equipment is used to install conservation practices like buffers, filter strips, grassed waterways, cover crops and more.

For more information, contact the Conservation District at (269)657-4030 x5.



John Deere No-Till Drill



This Nonpoint Source Pollution Control project has been funded in part through the Michigan Nonpoint Source Program by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement C9975474-05 to the Van Buren Conservation District for the Black River Watershed project. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the EPA, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.



RAINGARDENS

Raingardens are specially designed gardens that help capture and filter polluted runoff or stormwater before it enters our lakes and rivers. When it rains, the water runs off of roofs, lawns, parking lots and streets instead of soaking into the soil. This water, along with pollutants it picks up along the way, ends up in storm sewers and ditches that flow into our streams, rivers and lakes. Salt from roads, pet waste, lawn fertilizers, pesticides, spilled gas, oil and other pollutants are all washed into the local waters.



A rain garden is something that every homeowner can install, and is a great way to do your part to prevent polluted runoff from entering our waterways. Raingardens are shaped like shallow bowls and are planted with wildflowers and grasses to collect and infiltrate rainwater. Any size rain garden will help protect water quality, but generally, it should be about 20-30% of the size of the area that will drain into it. For example, if you plan to direct runoff from

your 1500 square foot roof into a rain garden, the garden should be about 300-450 square feet.

As with all gardening projects, site preparation is extremely important in creating a successful rain garden.

The ideal soil mixture for a rain garden is about 60% sand, 20% topsoil, and 20% compost. This mixture will promote proper infiltration of rainwater, ensuring that your rain garden will not become a pond! Dig down and loosen your soil to a depth of about 2 feet. Remove some of the existing soil,

and amend it with sand, topsoil, or compost to achieve the proper mix.

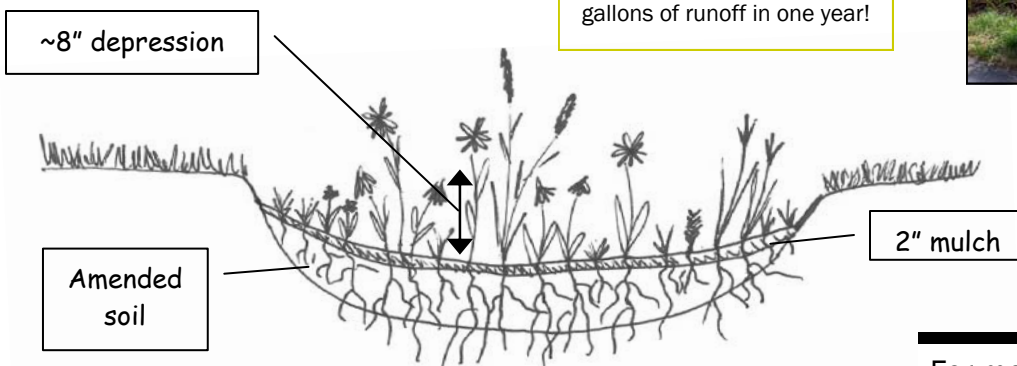
Native plants and wildflowers are ideal plants for your rain garden since they're adapted to our climate conditions. Once you've chosen the right plants for your spot, be sure to mulch them well; this will keep the plants moist and will discourage weeds.

How much rain runs off your roof?

A 1500 square foot roof generates over 30,000 gallons of runoff in one year!

Steps to create your rain garden:

1. Choose the right location: away from foundations, and near a downspout or paved area
2. Evaluate your soil type: do you have sand? Clay? Loam?
3. Develop a design: think about how will you direct water into your rain garden and how big it should be
4. Prepare the site: excavate and replace soil with about 60% sand, 20% topsoil, and 20% compost
5. Select the plants: think about plant height, bloom time, sun conditions, etc.
6. Plant the garden
7. Maintain your rain garden: mulch, weed, and water plants as they're getting established.
8. Enjoy your beautiful landscape!



For more information on rain gardens, visit www.raingardens.org

NATIVE PLANT SALE

If you're interested in planting a rain garden, butterfly garden, stream buffer, or just beautifying your yard, check out the Van Buren Conservation District's Native Plant Sale (go to <http://www.vbco.org/vbcd.asp> or call (269) 657-4030 x5 for an order form and more information). Pre-orders are due by May 18, or you may stop by the Conservation District office for the sale from 3:00 to 6:30 pm on Saturday, June 2.

Over 70 species of wildflowers, ferns and grasses are available.



LAND CONSERVATION IN THE BLACK RIVER WATERSHED

By Emily Wilke, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy

The Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC) is coordinating efforts to protect critical water resource landscapes in the Black River to protect water quality, wildlife habitat and agriculture in this fast developing region. The project consists of developing a land conservation plan and implementing a three year targeted outreach campaign to promote land conservation for water re-

sources.

SWMLC has assembled a Black River Watershed Land Protection Committee with members representing a variety of backgrounds and from locations scattered throughout the Watershed. Committee members are tasked with prioritizing conservation values, then applying these conservation values to specific

areas within the watershed. These prioritized conservation values will be entered into a natural resource based mapping analysis to identify environmentally sensitive areas to conserve. Property owners within in these priority conservation areas will be contacted and invited to a workshop this fall to learn about their land conservation and land enhancement options.

ONLY RAIN DOWN THE STORM DRAIN

In cities and villages across the country, there's a hidden threat to our waterways...storm drains. Storm drains are used to drain excess water off of our roads and parking lots. But once runoff enters the storm drain, where does it go? You might be surprised to learn that in most cases, pipes carry it into the nearest waterway without any purification. And the runoff that flows off of our parking lots and roads isn't very clean—it can contain motor oil, salt, sediment, heavy metals, and other pollutants.

Making the problem worse is that

some people don't realize that storm drains feed directly into our waterways, and they use them to dispose of hazardous chemicals, pet waste, and other pollutants. The Black River Watershed Project will be sponsoring a project to add decals to some of the storm drains in our watershed to educate people about dumping down the storm drains.

So, what should you do to dispose of hazardous chemicals, like oil, old cleaning products, oil-based paint, etc.? In Allegan County, contact Alle-



gan County Resource Recovery at (269) 673-5415 for disposal information, and in Van Buren County, contact MSU Extension at (269) 657-7745.

If you're interested in volunteering to help install decals (a great project for kids and families!), contact Erin at (269) 657-4030 x5.



Non Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Paw Paw, MI 49079
Permit No. 87

**BLACK RIVER WATERSHED PROJECT
VAN BUREN CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Erin Fuller – Watershed Coordinator
Van Buren Conservation District
1035 E. Michigan Ave.
Paw Paw, MI 49079
Phone: (269) 657-4030 x5
Fax: (269) 657-4925
E-mail: erin.fuller@mi.nacdnet.net



Your gateway to natural
resources management

We're on the web!
www.vbco.org/blackriver_2.asp

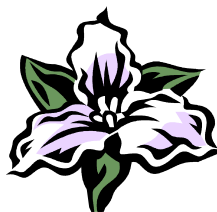
**Van Buren Conservation
District Board of Directors**

Jon Mills, Chairman
Bryan Cronenwett, Vice Chair
Shirley Jones, Treasurer
Mike Rainey, Secretary
Bill Mihelich, Director

UPCOMING EVENTS

Native Plant Sale

Saturday, June 2, 2007, 3:00-6:30pm
Pre-orders due May 18
Van Buren Conservation District Office
1035 E. Michigan Ave., Paw Paw



Native Plant Workshop

Saturday, June 2, 2007, 1:00-3:00pm
Location TBA

**The Healthy Home: Understanding Your
Home's Environmental Impacts**

Wednesday, July 11, 2007, 6:30-9:00pm
Van Buren Conference Center
490 S. Paw Paw St., Lawrence

**Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program
On-Farm Field Day**

Fall 2007

Backyard Wildlife Habitat Workshop Series

sponsored by the Allegan and Van Buren Con-
servation Districts
Fall 2007

Farming for the Future Conference

Van Buren Conference Center
December 10, 2007



For more information or to register for any of
these events, please contact the **Van Buren
Conservation District** at
(269) 657-4030 x 5.



Printed on recycled paper