

# The Story of our Rain Garden

Varieties of Gifts, but the Same Spirit...The Story of Our Rain Garden.



It has been a long time coming but the rain garden (stormwater detention basin) is finally completed! Just like it says in I Corinthians 12, it took a wide variety of parishioner gifts of the Spirit to bring it about, seasoned with prayer. And then it happened—and just under the deadline.

This new parking lot installation is a public statement of St. Thomas Becket's continuing commitment to living lightly and sustainably on this earth. It will grace our parking area while it cleans our stormwater runoff. It will do this by collecting the first flush of rainwater or snow melt—the most polluted portion of runoff—filtering it and sequestering water-transported sediment in a basin that will be cleaned out periodically. As a result, Hay Lake will receive clean water from our parking lot.

At the same time, our detention basin will serve as a pollinator patch! It has been planted with native prairie species, with many showy flowers. We look forward to seeing how it will grow and change and anticipate using it as a living classroom as well as simply enjoying its beauty and providing resources to pollinators.

The project began about 3 years ago with a letter to Fr. Tim from the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), inviting someone to attend a presentation on rain gardens. A parishioner attended on behalf of the parish and was impressed by what she heard: free engineering and design and grant funds to pay for the construction and planting. A preliminary decision was made to proceed.

Some time passed (we don't remember quite why!) and suddenly the grant expiration period was looming. A small committee was assembled for a scoping visit by our SWCD representative who explained the process and indicated that our chances were good for additional grant funds from Eagan which would result in essentially paying for the entire project. We were in!

By midsummer, the SWCD completed an engineered design with suggested native plants. Our indispensable administrative staff worked with the SWCD in the bidding process. In spite of the lateness of the season, a contractor was found. Construction started as soon as we could fit in his schedule.

Plants were ordered for dormant planting in November with wholesale prices provided through a team member's employer. Another team member graciously agreed to receive the shipments at his house and pick up the local order. Emails were flying back and forth as the team did last minute coordinating.

We got snow. We got unseasonably cold temperatures. The soil froze. Another team member had the foresight to rent an auger with which to drill perfectly sized planting holes for the 3inch plant plugs. A last minute appeal went out for more planting hands.

Then, on a cold, but sunny Saturday, November 9, within a few intense hours of work, the assembled on-the-ground team planted the rain garden. We made the deadline! What joy! (A team member even thought to snap a couple pictures of the triumph!)

When you see this rain garden come next spring, we hope you also look more deeply to see the many and varied gifts of the Spirit guiding this parish as members take to heart and action our mission "to Love, to Serve, and to be Hope." Nothing says hope quite like a garden! Watch this space...

**Thank you to all who came to help out:**

Lon Anderson, Andy Goettsch, Gatheryn Grimwood, Joe Hess, Bill Janssen, Paul Mandell, Steve, Kristin, Ben, Alyssa Matlon, Brennan McGlauchlen, Sally Milliman and Chuck Oestreich.

