



Save the Sound[®]

Action for our region's environment.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Save the Sound wraps up rain garden installations in New Haven

Seven new residential gardens bring three-year total to 28, will divert more than 300,000 gallons of stormwater.

New Haven, CT—For the past three years, Save the Sound has been crisscrossing the neighborhoods of Edgewood, Beaver Hills, West River, The Hill, Dixwell, and Newhallville—all adjacent to the West River—working with homeowners and their neighbors to install rain gardens. Working with volunteers from schools, organizations, and the neighborhoods where installations occurred, Save the Sound has installed a total of 28 rain gardens, which together will absorb more than 300,000 gallons of stormwater each year while providing low-maintenance beautification for homeowners. The work was funded by a US EPA Section 319 grant, which was administered by the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP).

“Rain gardens are a critical adaptation to climate change in urban areas,” **said Nicole Davis, watershed coordinator at Save the Sound.** “In the northeast especially, climate change is bringing more frequent heavy rain events—our cities’ stormwater systems were not designed to handle the sort of volume we’re seeing during these deluges. Rain gardens are a simple, beautiful, and highly effective way that any homeowner can beautify their property, create habitat for threatened pollinator species, AND protect their local waterways.”



1 - A newly-mulched rain garden incorporated into a front yard filled with plants!

On a sunny day in New Haven, all of the water in the city's combined sewage and stormwater system flows to a wastewater treatment plant to be cleaned before being released into the New Haven Harbor. When it rains, however, impervious surfaces like rooftops, roadways, and parking lots produce an excess of stormwater runoff and cause the combined storm-sanitary pipes—designed to overflow—to release stormwater and sewage, untreated, into the our rivers and Long Island Sound (you might hear this called a CSO, for “combined sewer overflow”).

Rain gardens and bioswales, which Save the Sound helped to pilot at the Edgewood School in 2014, are examples of green infrastructure (GI), engineered solutions that mimic natural processes to help stormwater infiltrate back into groundwater. Rain gardens are beds filled with native plants and designed to help capture, filter, and absorb stormwater runoff from rooftops. Downspouts from the roof are disconnected from the storm-sewer system, and runoff is redirected into the basin-like rain garden. There, specially-selected and arranged plants uptake and filter pollutants as the water gradually drains into New Haven's sandy soil.



2 - Jon and Nicole from Save the Sound's Ecological Restoration team installing a large rain garden.

Save the Sound's residential rain garden program is the most recently-completed in a string of projects advancing the restoration of the West River, one of three rivers flowing through New Haven. Past projects include self-regulating tide gates at the mouth of the river, the Edgewood Duck Pond, 75 bioswales installed with funding from the Greater New Haven Water Pollution Control Authority, and the celebrated removal of the Pond Lily Dam.

In addition to the restoration of the West River, another common thread connects the rain garden program to these past projects: the involvement of, and benefit to, adjacent communities. Rain gardens were constructed free-of-charge to homeowners, many of whom became champions of the green infrastructure practice and advocated for their neighbors to sign up for the program. One street, Roydon Road, had so much support for the program that Save the Sound put together a block party and green infrastructure tour for neighbors that was hosted by one of the first homeowners in the area to receive a rain garden.



3- Save the Sound staff led a green infrastructure walking tour for Roydon Road residents in September 2019.

“Word of mouth was far and away the most critical element of outreach that helped us achieve our goal of disconnecting more than a half an acre of rooftop area from the stormwater system,” **said Anthony Allen, ecological communications specialist at Save the Sound.** “Due to COVID-19, we weren’t able to invite homeowners and volunteers to help us with installations this year, and it was significantly more difficult to get the word out. Throughout this project we witnessed the power of community to help hasten and deepen the adoption of green infrastructure, and we are so grateful to all those homeowners who became advocates for this program.”

The final few gardens were among the most notable. They included the largest residential rain garden installed during the three-year program, and a custom-built raised-bed solution to capture runoff at the Harris and Tucker School just across the town line in Hamden. Save the Sound hopes to continue the rain garden program in coming years and is evaluating how and where that work can best happen.

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To learn more about Save the Sound’s restoration work along the West River:
<http://dailynutmeg.com/2019/05/22/connecticut-fund-environment-save-sound-waterworking/>

To view a webinar on rain gardens from Nicole Davis:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qj3bb_adL4E&t=9s