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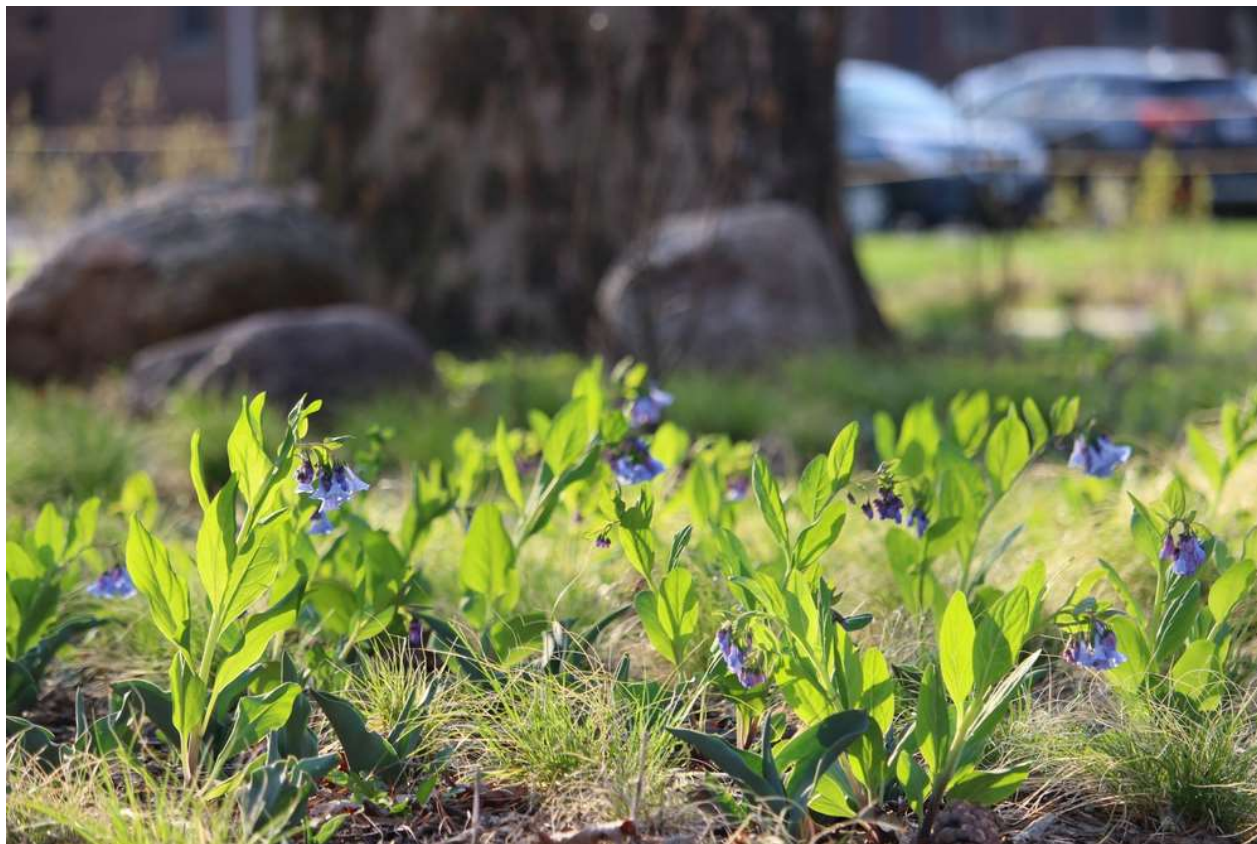
**April 2021**

By Layne Knoche, Visiting Extension Outreach Associate

## Welcome to The Red Oak Rain Garden's monthly newsletter!

The [Red Oak Rain Garden \(RORG\) Team](#) produces this e-newsletter monthly to keep our supporters up to date on everything that's going on at the garden. We are excited to announce that we continue to make progress on the community stewardship challenge grant thanks to your generous support.

We value your time and if you would not like to receive future communications, please click unsubscribe at the bottom of this email to opt-out.



Virginia Bluebells in bloom at the Red Oak Rain Garden. Photo by Layne Knoche.

## Public Engagement

### Blogs

- [In the Garden: March](#)
- [Mulch Madness 2021: Hold on to your gardening hats, sports fans!](#)

### Social Media Highlights

- Celebrated [World Wildlife Day](#) and [St. Patrick's Day](#).
- The annual Mulch Madness native plant competition began March 16 and wrapped up with the [championship game](#) between Virginia Bluebells and Butterflyweed on April 2. Virginia Bluebells was crowned the [2021 champion](#), after defeating Butterflyweed 57-54. We're nearing 50,000 people reached across our website and Facebook, Instagram, & Twitter accounts from this event!

### RORG Student Team

[Sandra Bjerga](#) helped to run the 2021 Mulch Madness native plant competition and has been involved in various other events and projects relating to the garden's social media.

### Presentations

- RORG Director Eliana Brown and RORG Landscape Designer Layne Knoche gave RORG presentations:
  - March 13: Vermillion County Master Gardener Garden Day Workshop
  - March 18: Think Spring Gardening Series
  - March 23: Allerton Park and Retreat Center Rain Garden Workshop
  - March 30: Leadership Illinois
- RORG Director Eliana Brown presented at the Indiana Master Watershed Steward Program.

### Progress toward Community Stewardship Challenge Grant

In partnership with the [Champaign County Design & Conservation Foundation](#), RORG received a Community Stewardship Challenge Grant from the [Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation](#) (ICECF). This grant helps natural areas establish relationships with new donors and/or to raise new support that can be directed towards stewardship. They match donations 3:1 up to \$7,000 and provide \$6,000 for volunteer hours for a total of \$32,000. **In January, we met our fundraising goal of \$7,000! As of March 31, we have recorded 308 volunteer hours of the 400 we need by August 31.**



## In the Garden

### March Activity

- ***Plant Life***

The last of the berries in the garden were eaten by the returning songbirds and overwintering pollinators began to emerge from their winter homes in plant stems and under the cover of last years' foliage. We loved getting one more glimpse of the showy red stems of Red Twig Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) before foliage once again took center stage.

Towards the end of the month, the garden quickly began to green up as the various groundcover sedges emerged from dormancy.

- **Monitoring**

*Precipitation:* 4.01" of precipitation was reported by the [CoCoRaHS](#) rain gauge watchers for the month.

- **Red Oak Health**

Extension Horticulture Educator [Ryan Pankau](#) has finalized plans to apply mycorrhizae and Cambistat around the Red Oak and is working with F&S. These will be applied in the next few weeks and will be followed by a guest blog to explain the importance of these practices.

- **Boardwalk Bridge Update**

RORG Director Eliana Brown and volunteer Shannon Tucker report that we're on track to build the boardwalk bridge late-May/early-June. Micah Putman of Allerton Park has delivered Black Locust trees to The Woodshop, a local lumber mill, where they're being cut into lumber.

## What to Watch for in April

The rain garden will bounce back from winter dormancy as the new additions of Virginia Bluebells, Shooting Star, Wild Hyacinth, and Woodland Phlox will bloom alongside the established populations of Foamflower, Rue Anemone, Wild Ginger, and Celandine Poppy. Building on their amazing groundcover qualities, Pennsylvania Sedge and Rosy Sedge will both bloom throughout the month, adding additional interest throughout the shaded areas of the garden.

## Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

Thank you to our wonderful [volunteers](#), who [prepped the garden](#) for the growing season last month. More volunteers are needed throughout the growing season to help with various garden-care activities. Interested? Send us an email at [redoakraingarden@gmail.com](mailto:redoakraingarden@gmail.com) or contact us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [Twitter](#).

Our volunteers now get to use new RORG tools and equipment! The purchase of these tools was made possible by our amazing supporters and the [Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation Community Stewardship Challenge Grant](#).



Rue Anemone in bloom at the Red Oak Rain Garden. Photo by Layne Knoche.

Support the Red Oak Rain Garden

### Red Oak Rain Garden | [redoakraingarden@gmail.com](mailto:redoakraingarden@gmail.com)

The Red Oak Rain Garden (RORG) is **located** on the University of Illinois Urbana campus between Allen Hall and McKinley Health Center. The RORG Team works for **Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant** and **University of Illinois Extension**.

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