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**Illinois Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



**RED OAK  
RAIN GARDEN**

**May 2021**

## **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. 💚



Tulips in bloom with native Foamflower at the Red Oak Rain Garden. Photo by Sandra Bjerga.

## Public Engagement

### Blogs

- [In the Garden: April](#)
- [Horticulture + Health: an Interview with Dr. Andrea Faber Taylor](#)

### Social Media Highlights

- Announced the [winner](#) of the 2021 Mulch Madness native plant competition.
- Celebrated [National Pets Day](#), [National Volunteer Week](#), [Earth Day](#), and [Arbor Day](#).

### RORG Student Team

[Sandra Bjerga](#) helped with the final days of [Mulch Madness 2021](#). She also interviewed UIUC's Andrea Faber Taylor and developed social media for our various platforms.

### Presentations & Tours

- RORG Director Eliana Brown presented virtually at a DuPage County Stormwater Management meeting.
- Guided RORG tours resumed in April with presentations given to various community organizations, including the Urbana Natural Areas group, and to students from UIUC's Allen Hall.

### 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 April 30, we have recorded 348 volunteer hours of the 400 we need by August 31.**

## Progress towards Community Stewardship Challenge Grant

### Volunteer Stewardship

Volunteer Hours:  
 **348 of 400** needed for ICECF Grant

Social Media Hours:  
 **104 of 100** needed for ICECF Grant

### Fundraising

Total Raised:  
 **\$7,000 of \$7,000** needed for ICECF Grant

## In the Garden

### March Activity

- ***Plant Life***

We think that April 2021 will go down as one of the most exciting months the Red Oak Rain Garden has ever experienced. The new display of [orange tulips](#) paired with native spring-blooming species like Virginia Bluebells, Jacob's Ladder, and Foamflower did not disappoint! Other newcomers that performed nicely from the fall 2020 installation include Woodland Phlox, Wild Hyacinth, and Shooting Star. Photos can be found on our social media accounts @RainGardenUIUC and in our [In the Garden: May](#) blog. The amazing display of blooms was made possible with the help of the [Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation](#) and all who supported us in raising funds, and of course all of our volunteers from the [East Central Illinois Master Naturalists](#), the [Champaign County Master Gardeners](#), and various classes and student organizations from the University of Illinois.

While April was a terrific month for beauty in the garden, the rest of the year promises to be just as exciting, with something new in bloom each week from now through September.

- ***Monitoring***

*Precipitation:* 2.25" 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 this month or in 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 May**

Many long-blooming species which started in April will continue to bloom through May, including Foamflower, Shooting Star, Wild Geranium, and Woodland Phlox. Other species blooming this month will include Wild Hyacinth, Red Chokeberry, Red Twig Dogwood, Blue Muffin Viburnum, Rozanne Geranium, and Prairie Alumroot. Migrating birds, including Warblers and Orioles, can be seen flying between the Red Oak Rain Garden, Dorner Drive Detention Pond, and the Illini Grove just to the south of the garden.

Historically, May is the wettest month of the year, when Champaign-Urbana averages a total of 4.80 inches of rain. Immediately following big rainstorms, be sure to watch our social media or swing by the garden yourself to see it in action. We're always amazed by how quickly the excess stormwater is soaked up!

## **Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities**

Thank you to our wonderful [volunteers](#), who are actively caring for the garden. 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](#).



Wild Geranium 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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