Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

RED OAK RAIN GARDEN

January-February 2022

Welcome to the Red Oak Rain Garden e-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.

Spring is around the corner! Depending on the day you're reading this, there might be snow on the ground or it might be 50 degrees. Regardless, signs of spring are happening and the Red Oak Rain Garden is getting ready by welcoming a few new faces.

You can be a part of RORG this spring too! See below for our voluneer opportunities. And, make sure to walk by the garden and you might see a robin eating Aronia berries -- always a welcome sight. Even if you're not in the area, you can enjoy the garden by playing along with our 3rd annual Mulch Madness competition. Read on for details.

Thank you to everyone who devotes time, energy, and resources to the garden.

Warmly,
Eliana Brown, RORG Director

A blanket of fresh snow covers the garden in early February. Photo by RORG Director Eliana Brown.

Public Engagement

Volunteer Opportunities

Interested in learning about native plant care? The Red Oak Rain Garden is seeking one-time volunteers to work alongside our core volunteers for spring cleanup on **Monday, March 21 from 2:00-7:00pm**, weather permitting. Limited experience required. Volunteers gain hands-on experience in early-season rain garden care and have the opportunity to learn about dozens of native plant species. We have tools, but feel free to bring a pair of gloves and a rake, if you have one. If you're interested in helping, please connect with us on RORG social media or email us at uie-RedOakRainGarden@illinois.edu.

Regular workdays resume this spring on Fridays from 9:00-11:00am. If you're interested in joining our core group of volunteers who attend these workdays regularly, connect with us on RORG social media or email us at uie-RedOakRainGarden@illinois.edu.

Blogs

- Deicing Salts and Plant Damage

Social Media Highlights

- Celebrated New Year's Day, MLK Day, First Day of Spring Semester, Year of the Tiger, Black History Month, and Valentine's Day.
- The 3rd annual Red Oak Rain Garden Mulch Madness native plant competition will begin on Tuesday, March 15th. Watch for more information coming soon!

RORG Staffing Updates
The RORG Team is thrilled to welcome Sydney Nielsen as our Spring 2022 Student Intern! Sydney, a communications major, is involved in RORG's social media, including helping to plan and prepare for the upcoming Mulch Madness native plant competition.

We also welcome Gabe Harper, Extension Sustainable Communities Assistant, who is helping to coordinate volunteer stewardship, and Joan Cox, Extension Nutrient Outreach Associate, who works primarily on another project but may contribute to RORG as time allows.

Fundraising

Now that the bridge has been built, our fundraising focus shifts to the installation of an interpretive sign that explains what a rain garden is, as well as the general history of the Red Oak Rain Garden. If you're interested in supporting this phase of the project, click here.

In the Garden

January & February Activity

- *Plant Life*
  Songbirds, especially Robins, are finishing off the remaining berries from Winterberry and Red Chokeberry, which is typical for late winter.
- *Monitoring*
  Precipitation: Our CoCoRaHS rain gauge watchers reported just .53 inches of liquid-equivalent precipitation in January, which is well below the monthly average of 2.05 inches. Through February 25, they recorded 3.33 inches of liquid-equivalent precipitation, which is far more than the monthly average of 2.13 inches. Though we haven't recorded snowfall amounts this year, several February snowstorms brought us close to our seasonal average snow total after the area saw a historic stretch of snowless weather from November to January.

What to Watch for in March

Signs of returning plant life can be seen by mid-March. Watch for the various species of sedges to begin greening up. The tulips, Virginia Bluebells, and other spring ephemerals will start to emerge with the first warm spell.

A Robin eyes the fruit of Red Chokeberry. Photo by Layne Knoche.

Upcoming Adaptive Management

RORG has continual monitoring, and as the Team notices issues, we use adaptive management to resolve them. We want to share that process with you! A great example occurred in February, when heavy precipitation fell onto frozen ground, highlighting a worst-case scenario that caused water to pool on certain stretches of sidewalks around the garden. The Team will work with our volunteers and Facilities & Services to address these issues in early spring.

A few areas around the garden have standing water issues that will be addressed this spring.

Support the Red Oak Rain Garden

Red Oak Rain Garden | 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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Office of Extension and Outreach | 111 Mumford Hall (MC-710) | 1301 W. Gregory Dr. | Urbana, IL 61801 | Phone: (217) 333-5900 | Email extension@illinois.edu
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