

ALLIANCE OF
DOWNRIVER
WATERSHEDS

GROW ZONE MINI-GRANT PROJECT PROFILE

Why native plant gardens?

Native plants have deep, “thirsty” roots that help retain water on your site and filter out the pollutants in runoff. They help stabilize soils and prevent erosion. Native plants are drought tolerant, so you water less. Native plants are disease resistant and rarely require fertilizers, so you save money. Native plants improve soil conditions on their own, so you save time.

Reducing water runoff from hard surfaces and yards is key to protecting water quality. Water that runs off hard surfaces, lawns and gardens contain pollutants like fertilizers, dirt and debris. When polluted runoff enters storm drains and ditches, it is discharged into the river system unfiltered.

About the Grow Zone Mini-Grant

The Grow Zone Mini-Grant program was established in 2008 to find host sites within the Downriver area to implement native planting projects. After issuing a call for proposals, the Alliance of Downriver Watersheds selected a total of 10 host sites, which included several schools, parks and municipal properties.



GUDITH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WILDFLOWERS

BROWNSTOWN TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

At Gudith Elementary School in Brownstown Township, the front yard of the school has been turned into an outdoor learning environment for students, consisting of natural vegetation, a butterfly garden and prairie garden. Formerly planted with turf grass, the school’s front yard borders the northerly and westerly embankments of the Van Kleeef Drain, a tributary within the Combined Downriver Watershed.

Recognizing an opportunity to intercept and slow storm water runoff, trap particulate pollutants, prevent erosion into the Van Kleeef Drain, as well as provide a natural learning environment for students, the Woodhaven-Brownstown School District received funding for the project through the Grow Zone Mini-Grant program.



What's a grow zone?

A “grow zone” is a native planting area that is implemented to improve water quality and wildlife habitat. Grow zones, which usually replace lawn areas, provide many benefits:

- reduce stormwater going to our rivers
- increase wildlife habitat
- improve water quality, and,
- cost less to maintain than traditional lawn areas



BEFORE



PLANTING DAY - JUNE 2009



AFTER

The Gudith Elementary School Wildflowers project encompasses approximately 1.2 acres of land and approximately 700 feet of frontage on the Van Kleef Drain. Planted in June 2009, the site includes a butterfly garden area, prairie garden area, as well as an area that can be utilized as an outdoor classroom. Since planting, the school has witnessed benefits, including an estimated maintenance savings of nearly \$5,000 per year. Given the project's high visibility, the project also provides public awareness concerning the importance of natural vegetation and riparian buffers.

Over the course of the next several years, the Alliance of Downriver Watersheds (ADW) will engage in the monitoring of each grow zone site (10 were completed in 2009) and is committed to implementing additional green infrastructure projects to realize regional water quality and habitat diversity improvements.

About the Alliance of Downriver Watersheds

The Alliance of Downriver Watersheds (ADW) is a governing body in southeast Michigan established to carry out stormwater policy and management across the Ecorse Creek, Combined Downriver and Lower Huron River watersheds. The members of the ADW include the Wayne County Airport Authority, Woodhaven-Brownstown School District and 24 units of government in the Downriver Area.



www.allianceofdownriverwatersheds.com

Project at a Glance

Location

Gudith Elementary School
22700 Sibley Road
Brownstown Township, MI

Applicant

Woodhaven Brownstown School District

Partners

- C.E. Raines Company
- Wayne County

Award Amount

\$4,353

Funding Source

Clean Michigan Initiative
Nonpoint Source Program

Planting Date

June 1 and June 8, 2010

Planting Size

53,578 square feet

Estimated Maintenance

Savings

\$4,738 per year

This Nonpoint Source Pollution Control project has been funded, in part, by the Clean Michigan Initiative Nonpoint Source Program to Wayne County for the Grow Zones Across the ADW project. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.