

# Nestucca Valley Presbyterian Inspires Watershed Stewardship

## Background

Located in Pacific City, Nestucca Valley Presbyterian is a small church with a big vision. The church has been through a lot since 2001 when it was formed through the merger of Nestucca Presbyterian Church and Pacific City Community Presbyterian. With a small financial base and much resourcefulness, eventually a new church was built and dedicated on October 26, 2008. The vision for the new space included providing a place for the community to use for the arts, in addition to serving as a space for worship. The beautiful new building, equipped with a state of the art sound system, is available for rent for weddings, receptions, art shows, plays, and other events including events sponsored by the Pacific City Arts Association.



Photo of the rain garden in its first year looking toward Brooten Rd. Over time, the vegetation will cover the bare ground.

## Vision for Project.

Pat Sears, an avid gardener, volunteered to design a landscape for the new building. The idea for a more environmentally-friendly option came from a church member who informed Pat that he found information on church “rain gardens” on the Greening Congregations page of the Cascades Presbytery web site ([www.cascadespresbytery.org/](http://www.cascadespresbytery.org/)). Rain gardens are planted basins that slow and retain water (also known as infiltration basins or bioswales). They are a valuable way to cleanse and filter storm water runoff from hard space areas and reduce flooding, provide wildlife habitat and beautify the environment.” It struck Pat that a rain garden could be a great way to be good stewards and to demonstrate something new to the community at their building site. She describes the project as both a “real challenge” and “real exciting.”

## History and Description of the Project

In 2007, Sears began planning the landscape and finding partners to help. She had good connections to the local Boy Scouts by virtue of having two grandsons involved. The first project involved distributing a donated load of topsoil and planting a hedge on perimeter of area. The second project involved the help of a grandson working for his Eagle Scout rating. He helped plan a vegetated berm on the northwest corner of the church, and with the aid of his troop, prepared the area and planted it.

Nestucca Connections, an alternative education class at Nestucca High School, along with their instructor, put in many hours of work digging out a basin and adding topsoil and compost. Later they dug ditches and connected pipes to downspouts. Church members hauled rock, spread bark and planted. Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Sea Grant provided some funds for the garden and technical assistance. Robert Emanuel, water resources and community development educator of OSU Extension proved invaluable as a technical advisor to the project. The garden has been designated as one of three watershed demonstration projects in Tillamook County.

OSU Extension has trained more than 100 people to use the simple and fairly inexpensive rain garden technology that can be used in parking lot islands, street right-of-ways and as part of landscaping for homes and commercial development. The process reproduces the natural conditions of a watershed, with a sunken surface planted with native plants to retain flowing storm-water long enough for the water to infiltrate the soil.

Located on the west side of the building, the rain garden is visible to all traveling on Brooten Road and those turning on Church Street for the front entrance of the church. The garden is on very sandy soil and water evaporates quickly. Thus, unlike rain gardens on clayey soils, the water rarely forms a pool. It will take the garden a while to fill out. In the first year, 17 plant varieties were planted including beach strawberry, kinnikinnick, six varieties of iris, native camassia and two types of sedges. The rain garden basin is 48' x 8' and is on an 80' x 43' lot. It is difficult to delineate the rain garden from surrounding landscape as they flow together. Additional shrubs were purchased to fill in surrounding landscape. Plants were selected for extreme weather conditions (strong beach winds), sandy soil and ability to adapt to wet roots in the winter and near drought conditions in summer. They came through first winter (2008-09) very well.

Rain gardens are low maintenance, but that's not the same as NO maintenance. Pat has a schedule of care. For the first two to three years, most plants need deep watering during the dry season to establish healthy root systems. Also, weeds need to be pulled out before they go to seed to prevent weeds from overwhelming native plants. A minimum of grooming is needed each fall.

### **Lessons Leaned**

Rain Gardens should be given definite consideration for church landscaping since they are a responsible way of handling runoff water. Water is a necessary element in our lives and needs to be treated with respect and appreciation. Building and land development increase impermeable surfaces and thus increase the volume of run-off water since water is prevented from filtering into the soil naturally. Perhaps most important, these features provide a positive way to demonstrate good stewardship in the community.

Working with volunteer help is an area where planning could have been improved. At times not enough supervision was arranged to oversee a group, especially when preparing the holes and planting properly.

The interest, willingness and support of church members and community was greatly appreciated and beyond expectation.

### **Plans and Hopes for the Future**

Next steps for the garden include the following:

- Plan and construct a sign appropriate for church garden that explains essence of a rain garden.
- Establish a path and install a bench.
- Continue to evaluate and change if necessary plants suitable for that particular location

The church desires to be an integral contributing part of the community. As well as providing religious leadership, the church wants to be able to provide educational opportunities for neighbors and visitors in the area. The garden is a place for the community to learn about the construction and maintenance of rain gardens and what can grow successfully in harsh beach environment. Hopefully it will be a source of information and pleasure for those viewing the area and a witness to the church's stewardship values.

## Project Expenses and Donations

### Costs

Costs paid by Sea Grant---Plants--	\$202.00
PVC pipe and fittings---	91.31
Bark & Delivery	255.00
Gravel	14.97
TOTAL	\$563.28

Costs paid by members of NVPC---

Tractor work to level area	\$125.00
Plants---	\$82.00

### Donations

Tractor Work---Paul Fletcher  
                    Bob Boring  
Top Soil---Dick Warren  
Compost---George Prince  
Plants---Lee Sliman, Connie Hansen Garde,  
Grace, Mick and Pat Sears  
River Rock---Bob Boring

Volunteers include Boy Scout Troop #170, Robert Emanuel, Nestucca Connections, Chuck Allen, Lee Sliman, Bob and Carol Boring, Phyllis and Charlie Chapman, Cathie Jones, John Swenson, Jim Oleson, Margaret Slagle, Grace Mick, David, Douglas and Austin Sears, and last but by no means least, Pat Sears.



Rob Emanuel (L) and Pat Sears (R) installing part of the rain garden.

### Project Contacts

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**Resources:**

Oregon Sea Grant, <http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/outreach/index.html>

Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge, <http://www.fws.gov/oregoncoast/nestuccabay/index.htm>

Native Plant Information

<http://www.rainyside.com/natives/>

Native Plant Society of Oregon, <http://npsoregon.org/landscaping1.html>

Sources of Native Plants

<http://www.native-plants.com>

<http://www.boskydelnatives.com/coast.htm>

Rain Garden Design

[http://www.lowimpactdevelopment.org/raingarden\\_design/how2designraingarden.htm](http://www.lowimpactdevelopment.org/raingarden_design/how2designraingarden.htm)

General Information on Rain Gardens

<http://www.raingardennetwork.com/>



Students of Nestucca Connections making their vital contribution to construction of the rain garden.

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