

CleanScapes Communities

■ Problem:

Fertilizers and grass clippings from residential lawns were polluting local streams during big storm events. When excess organic material decomposes in water, it uses significant amounts of oxygen leaving less for the organisms in the ecosystem. Many land owners and landscape companies were unaware that they were contributing to phosphorous pollution and water quality problems in the nearby Little Patuxent River. Education and retraining were needed to approach projects in a cleaner, more responsible way.

■ Solution:

Howard County CleanScapes Communities program educates residents and local landscape companies through workshops, newsletters, and signage at 28 newly installed rain gardens in neighborhoods adjacent to the Little Patuxent River. Residents receive a credit towards their county Watershed Protection Fee for the amount of impervious surface they are treating relative to their onsite impervious area. Thanks to this program and the support of National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), Village Gardeners landscape company is now advocating for healthier ways to beautify the landscape and preserve water quality too.

What is Polluted Runoff?

The growth of our cities has resulted in too many paved surfaces, which prevent rain water from being absorbed by the ground. Instead, the water runs off streets and buildings, collecting trash and dangerous chemicals on its way. This contaminated water overflows into our streams and rivers, creating public health hazards and toxic waters. Stormwater projects create safe paths for polluted runoff to be captured and filtered before it reaches our waterways. They keep communities healthy and the environment clean.

mostcenter.org/casestories



Photo Credit: Julie Costantino

Key Project Facts

Project Location: Howard County, MD

Type of Project: Bioretention

Cost: \$70,000 for 28 new residential rain gardens, approx. 200 SF each

Funding Sources: \$20,000 grant from NFWF, matched with \$50,000 from Howard County

Partners:

- Village Gardeners and Howard EcoWorks (landscape design and installation services)
- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (marketing)
- Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professionals (professional landscape certification)

Contact: Julie Costantino

jcostantino@howardcountymd.gov
410-313-0678

More Info: <https://www.cleanwaterhoward.com/what-is-your-role/residential-properties/cleanscapes>

When communities and their local governments work together to solve big problems like stormwater runoff, that's a story worth telling!