

## **Sustainable Urban Landscapes (SUL)**

**Staff:** 3.25 FTE staff (Two full time staff, and two staff shared with other programs) and five contracted employees

Kathy Shearin – Program Manager

Candace Stoughton – Low Impact Development Specialist

Katie Meckes – Outreach Coordinator (position is shared with CTA)

**Program Budget FY 08-09:** \$385,493

**Purpose:** The program’s purpose is to foster a stewardship ethic relative to the urban landscape by encouraging an urban lifestyle that folds pollution prevention into everyday life. It introduces urban residents to the benefits of sustainable landscaping/remodeling practices, and then works with them, at the neighborhood level, to gain the information, skills, and confidence needed to take action. Naturescaping not only decreases/eliminates the use of water for summer irrigation, reduces/eliminates the use of toxics in the home landscape (which too often wash into our waterways) and increases rainfall infiltration by increasing physiognomic “roughness” of home landscapes. It also has the additional benefits of increasing wildlife habitat, sequestering carbon, improving air quality, reducing solid waste and energy use, and making backyards safer for children and other chemically sensitive individuals. Our rain garden classes inspire and instruct, guiding homeowners in the construction of safe, effective and beautiful rain gardens. On most properties this simple landscaping tool can divert stormwater currently directed to the combined sewer and allow it to infiltrate the ground on site instead.

**Approach:** The program provides opportunities for urban residents to gain knowledge, skills, and confidence – empowering them to move from information to action. We do this through workshops and events focused on a various topics. Our workshops and events range from very basic to more in-depth. We strive to give both first-time gardeners and experienced landscape designers the information that they can take back to their landscape.

Examples of our workshops and events include:

**Naturescaping Workshop Series:** This is a series of three workshops held throughout the tri-county Portland metropolitan region.

**Workshops outside the District** are financially sponsored by local groups and/or jurisdictions (Cities, Water Providers/Wastewater Agencies, etc). All Naturescaping workshops must have a sponsor, which is usually (but not always), a local government jurisdiction (city, county, or special district). The sponsor provides financial support for the workshop. In addition, the workshops are held only in neighborhoods where community groups are willing to serve as “community hosts.” This aspect ensures that the program is well received by the neighborhood and is suited to their specific needs.

The sponsoring jurisdiction and/or community host are expected to:

- Secure a neighborhood workshop site, without charge to the NCR program,
- Promote the workshop locally
- Provide refreshments,
- Provide staff and/or volunteers to help with set-up, check-in, and take-down at the workshop,
- Provide a projection screen, projector stand, and two easels (if available).

**Naturescaping Basics (4hrs):** The first in our series and introduces attendees to some of our common native plants, pollution prevention, their connection with the watershed and other core concepts of Naturescaping.

Naturescaping Basic workshops, each 4-hours long, are held on Saturday mornings or Sunday afternoons. They are free to participants but pre-registration is required. We require a minimum pre-registration of 18 individuals and a maximum of 35-60 (depending on location).

The workshop agenda includes:

Introductory discussion:

What is Naturescaping? What does it have to do with clean water?

What is a watershed? What is a stewardship?

Discussion of core gardening practices that impact stormwater:

- Pollution prevention,
- Water conservation,
- Integrated Pest Management (alternatives to pesticides),
- Erosion control

Slide show:

- What Naturescaping is/isn't;
- Examples of naturescaped yards (range of possibilities);
- Naturescaping as a decision process rather than a landscape style (what to plant, where to plant it & how to take care of it).

Case study to illustrate site-planning principles;

Short field trip to naturescaped yard or community project nearby;

Q & A session for questions about participants' landscaping issues.

Workshop program includes two instructors, displays, slide shows, field trip, Q & A session.

Materials for each participant:

- Naturescaping guide book
- Information packet (brochures & booklets on alternatives to pesticides, composting, and more)
- Native plant (4-inch)
- Door prizes (several 1-gal native plants)

**Site Planning Workshop (4hrs):** These workshops focus on learning and practicing the process, using generic examples. Participants are given more detailed and site specific information and are given a chance to learn some of the more hands-on aspects of site design.

These 4 hour workshops, offered on Saturday mornings or Sunday afternoons are designed for 30-40 participants each. The first group exercise gives participants a chance to practice new skills as they learn them. The second exercise demonstrates that there is no right or wrong way to design a natural landscape & that there are many different solutions to the same problem. This helps them overcome the fear of “doing it wrong.”

The agenda is as follows:

- Review of site planning principles
- Group exercise measuring landscape features and converting measurements to graph paper.
- Presentation by landscape designer on using site conditions & how it is to be used to set landscape goals, with a focus on defining the functions of plants and hardscape features first.
- Second group exercise developing landscape plan for hypothetical residence, each group working with different combination of occupant characteristics, landscape goals, site limitations and opportunities. The exercise ends with group presentation of their landscape plans.

Discuss next steps; participants are encouraged to attend Site Planning Feedback Sessions as observers, as they work on the site inventories; then as presenters, once they have a draft site plan.

***Site Planning Feedback Session (2hrs):*** These sessions switch the focus to what participants are doing or planning to do in their own yards. Participants have the opportunity to bring in their draft landscape design and get feedback from our landscape designers. These are shorter, involving only 5 to 10 individuals who may attend as a presenter, or as an observer/member of the group providing feedback. It is required that they have attended both the Basic Workshop and the Site Planning Workshop. Before presenting, individuals must have completed a preliminary site inventory, including a list of limitations & opportunities for the area where they will start, & be prepared to discuss their goals and site issues. They are asked to bring photographs, slides, or drawings of the site – and to provide copies for the Naturescaping program’s files.

Each presenter has 20 minutes. It is suggested they spend 5 or 10 minutes telling the group about their site and its characteristics, leaving 10 to 15 minutes to discuss their plan. The workshop facilitators complete a feedback form for each presentation, pointing out additional opportunities to incorporate Naturescaping principles – and remind the homeowners that permits and/or expert advice may be needed. Others in the audience are encouraged to give feedback on a written form as well.

***Introduction to Naturescaping (45 min.):*** This presentation is geared towards neighborhood associations, garden clubs, conferences and other public events. The goal of this presentation is to introduce the concept of Naturescaping, garner interest for the series of Naturescaping workshops and to recruit new workshop hosts. Last year we spoke to over 400 individuals at these introductory presentations.

***Native Plants workshop (45 minutes – 2hrs):*** This workshop introduces attendees to the importance of planting native plants, walks through a number of native plants of the region, showing images, and their ecological requirements.

**Weeds Presentation (45 minutes – 2 hrs):** This presentation varies according to venue and audience. It introduces attendees to some of the most commonly found weeds within the urban sector, talks to why these weeds are a problem, discusses appropriate control methods and suggests native alternatives to some of these weeds.

**Native Plant Sale:** This incredibly popular event serves as a public relations and outreach tool and is an excellent way to get low-cost native plants into the hands and yards of Portland area residents. Additionally, participants received native plant information and information about our numerous other services.

**Garden Tours:** Each year Naturescaping hosts a Naturescaped Yard tour. This tour, of usually 6-10 yards, allows attendees to see real-life examples of Naturescaping, gives them a chance to talk to the gardeners, see before and after photos and learn new Naturescaping techniques. In 2008 over 350 people attended our tour.

SUL also partners with Metro to put on the highly successful “Gardens of Natural Delights” Tour. This is a region-wide tour of gardens aimed at showing various natural gardening practices. The tour boasts 25-30 gardens and an attendance of 2,600 tour-goers.

**Introduction to Rain Gardens (2 hours):** This is an introduction to rain gardens as a key tool in the new approach to sustainable stormwater management. Attendees get an overview of rain gardens and learn how to safely site one on their property.

**Rain Gardens 101 (3hrs):** This class teaches participants the principles behind sustainable stormwater management and gives them the knowledge they need to build a rain garden on their property as a way to protect our local urban streams and overloaded sewer systems. The three hour workshop is generally held on Saturday mornings or weekday evenings. They are free to participants but pre-registration is required. We require a minimum pre-registration of 18 individuals and a maximum of 35-60 (depending on location).

#### Workshop Agenda

##### **Introduction to Stormwater Issues**

- What is stormwater? What are impervious surfaces?
- How have we traditionally managed stormwater in the past? What kinds of problems have occurred as a result?
- (pollution, unnatural flooding, in-stream habitat degradation, reduced stream flow during the summer)
- How rain gardens restore the natural water cycle of a watershed

##### **Site Assessment Hands On Exercise**

The class breaks up into groups and evaluates a residential lot to determine:

- where it is safe to place a rain garden
- how to move water across the property safely

- calculate how much impervious surface will be managed by each rain garden  
the size of each rain garden

### **Challenging Sites; Slopes**

### **Rain Garden Construction and Design**

Concepts presented include:

- step by step, how to build a rain garden
- plants appropriate for each zone of the rain garden
- invasives to avoid
- maintenance

### **Rain Garden Site Visit:**

In situations where the workshop is held in a location with a nearby rain garden, workshop participants visit a local rain garden.

**Workshop program includes** one instructor, slide shows, field trip, Q & A session.

Materials for each participant:

- Rain garden information packet

**Welcome the Rain! Event:** Welcome the Rain! is a new fall event that celebrates all that the rain brings to our region as well as a “solutions fair” showing ways to solve some of the challenges stormwater brings to our urban environment. We have a mix of informational booths and non-profits, nurseries offering rain garden and ecoroof specific plants, and companies offering various stormwater/rain harvesting products or services. We also provide free workshops about downspout disconnection, rain gardens, porous pavement, bike commuting in the rain, ecoroofs as well as many other topics will be running throughout the day. Participants can also peruse and vote for their favorite piece of art at our creative rain sculpture contest.