

Clean Air Counts Demonstration Gardens: Raising Awareness of Natural Landscaping

August 2009



CLEAN
AIR
COUNTS
Make A
Visible
Difference

This page is intentionally
left blank

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

II. Gardens

III. Helpful Websites

Clean Air Counts is a northeastern Illinois regional initiative of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus to reduce ozone causing emissions, thereby improving air quality and enabling economic development. It is a collaborative effort between the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, City of Chicago, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5, and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. This multi-year initiative seeks to achieve specific and significant reductions in targeted smog forming pollutants and major reductions in energy consumption.

Clean Air Counts is made possible through the support of The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust, Grand Victoria Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Metropolitan Mayors Caucus
177 N. State Street, 5th Floor
Chicago, IL 60601
info@cleanaircounts.org
312-201-4506

I. Introduction

Clean Air Counts started in 2000 as a collaborative partnership of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, US EPA, Illinois EPA, City of Chicago, and regional not-for-profit organizations. The campaign offers a voluntary approach to targeting smog inducing pollutants from unregulated sources for significant reduction coupled with an innovative quantification and reporting system as a way to record and calculate the pollutants reduced for credit in the State Implementation Plan. The campaign was designed to remove 5 tons of air pollutants per day. The Campaign has exceeded its goal and removed 12.9 tons per day.

Clean Air Counts lessens environmental impacts while working to improve air quality by promoting emission reduction strategies to businesses, institutions, municipalities, and households throughout the six county Chicago metropolitan region. These strategies involve restoring natural lands, operations and maintenance practices (such as reducing the use of pesticides and gasoline powered lawn care equipment), purchasing and other changes that are relatively easy to implement. From the start, the Campaign worked with businesses to encourage them to convert turf landscapes to Native Landscapes. The Campaign met with resistance because business had invested significant resources in their corporate campuses and were reluctant to change them. Reluctance stemmed from concerns that clients, customers and employees would be uncomfortable with non traditional landscapes. The campaign responded by shifting its focus to raising awareness of natural landscaping.

In 2007, the Campaign began promoting prairie, wetland and woodland restoration through the creation of "Native Plant Demonstration Gardens. Thanks to the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation, the Campaign was able to fund Openlands to assist with designing, installing, and providing financial support for small, highly visible, native plant restorations. Demonstration gardens were accompanied by signage about native landscaping. The small, but high visibility, gardens have been instrumental in raising awareness of native and natural landscaping. Increasing awareness and comfort level with native gardens enables local governments and businesses to substitute native and natural gardens for high maintenance turf grass. Native and natural gardens have several environmental benefits like reduced emissions from mowing, pesticides and fertilizers; requiring less maintenance and care leading to substantial cost savings; requiring less water while better absorbing water; reducing erosion; and promoting biodiversity.

As the Clean Air Counts Campaign works to change behavior, the Campaign has learned one critically important thing about increasing acceptance of native landscapes. In the first year after the garden is planted, people can become dismayed because they are accustomed to annuals and other traditional landscapes that look bright, colorful and full immediately. See Figure 1 for a typical first year garden.



Figure 1: Recently planted garden

As you can tell, the garden has some plantings and lots of mulch, but not much color. Not only is it unlike a traditional garden, it is not as lush a well maintained turf lawn. Native and natural landscape gardens can take two and sometimes three years to look full, colorful and vibrant. By increasing awareness of natural gardening, the campaign seeks to build

acceptance for first year gardens, too.

This document is essentially a yearbook for our demonstration gardens showcasing the process of becoming established. This is a living document that will be updated when new pictures are available.

The two year Demonstration Garden Program has led to the creation and installation of the following gardens. This document will be updated with pictures of our gardens. The following is a list of all of the native gardens that you are welcome to visit.

- Columbia College Sculpture Garden
- Greater Chicago Food Depository
- Greenmaker Supply
- St. Lawrence O'Tool Parish School
- Calumet Specialty Products
- Wilbur Wright
- Wyndemere Independent Living
- Museum of Science and Industry Smart Home Exhibit
- Village of Orland Park
- Carmeuse Lime and Stone
- Des Plaines Park District
- Provena Senior Services
- Fox Knoll Retirement and Assisted Living Community in Aurora
- Village of Homer Glen Serenity Garden
- Village of Lincolnwood Rain Garden
- Unitarian Church Evanston

WHAT IS NATURAL LANDSCAPING?

Natural landscaping uses native plants, wildflowers and grasses to landscape around large commercial properties and residential developments instead of planting traditional turf grass. Because natural landscaping is adapted to the Midwestern geography, hydrology and climate, it requires fewer pesticides, fertilizers and watering to maintain. It costs less to install than traditional landscaping and, after the initial few years, reduces maintenance costs, combats erosion, and accommodates

Why Should You Use NATURAL LANDSCAPING?

NATURAL LANDSCAPING Benefits of participating in natural landscaping include:

- Reduced emissions of smog, hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide from diesel engine-powered mowers and other maintenance equipment.
- Fewer ozone alert days in the summertime.
- Improved regional air quality.
- Reduced maintenance effort, such as mowing, weeding and aerating for lower maintenance costs.
- Lower use of pesticides, fertilizers and watering to maintain the landscaping.
- Prevention of land erosion.
- Better accommodation of storm and flood waters.
- Significant reductions in planting and maintenance costs.
- Doesn't attract lingering geese.
- Less likelihood of a more restrictive regulatory environment for the region in the future. storm and flood waters better. It is also a natural deterrent to lingering geese.

II. Gardens

Columbia College Sculpture Garden

The Sculpture Garden was installed in Spring of 2005. Columbia College has added to the garden each year since 2006.

All the plants are native to our region and require much less watering than turf grass. The garden is maintained by the Chicago Christian Industrial League.



Above: Before garden installation.

Visit this garden at the corner of 11th Street and Wabash Avenue in downtown Chicago.

Below: Spring of 2006





Above: Fall 2008
Below: July 2009



Chicago Greater Food Depository

The Greater Chicago Food Depository installed native plants in three parking lot islands. Prior to the native plant installation the islands were turf grass.



Above: Installation in 2006

Left: August 2006-just installed

Below: July 2008

Visit this garden at
4100 W 42ND PI
Chicago, IL 60632





Above: July 2009

Saint Lawrence O’Toole Parish School

Saint Lawrence O’Toole Parish School partnered with Clean Air Counts to install a demonstration garden around the statue of St. Lawrence in front of the school.



Above: Site visit prior to installation in October 2007.



Left: August 2008-10 months after installation

Below: The sign below describes the garden as a “Native Plant Demonstration Garden”. Signage is a key component of the gardens program because it ensures that people visiting the garden will learn about native plants.



DID YOU KNOW?

According to the U.S. EPA, lawn mowers alone account for up to 33% of all air pollution in our urban areas.



Above and Below: July 2009



Calumet Specialty Products



Visit this Garden at
14000 S. Mackinaw Ave
Burnham, IL
60633

Above: Prior to installation.

Right: Informational signage.

Below: Just in installed





Above: July 2009

Orland Park Village Hall

Visit this Garden at
14700 S. Ravinia Ave
Orland Park, IL 60462

Below: February 5, 2008



Left: August 14, 2008:
Just Planted

Below: October 20, 2008



DID YOU KNOW?

According to the U.S. EPA, lawn mowers alone account for up to 33% of all air pollution in our urban areas.



Above and Below: Taken July 2009



Newer Gardens: Lincolnwood



Visit this Garden at The North Shore Channel Bicycle Path that stretches between the North Shore Channel and the McCormick Boulevard in Lincolnwood.

Left Page: Picture taken the same day of installation. This rain garden should help absorb water better than the turf grass. May 2009.





Above: July20 09

Carmeuse Lime and Stone



Visit this Garden at
Carmeuse Lime & Stone
3245 E. 103rd St
Chicago, IL 60617

Left: Photo taken prior to
installation in May of 2009.



Above: Volunteers install
garden in spring 2009.

Right: Newly installed
garden





Above and Below: July 2009



Wyndemere Senior Living Campus



Above: Before picture.



Visit this Garden at
Wyndemere Senior Living
Campus
200 Wyndemere Circle
Wheaton, IL 60187

Left and Below: One year
later June 2009.



Green Depot Chicago Store



Green Depot: Clean Air Counts partnered with Green Depot to install the garden in 2006 soon after the store opened. The pictures above were taken in spring of 2009. The picture on the upper left shows the walkway into the store where the prairie plants border the permeable paver walkway. The upper right picture provides greater detail of the permeable pavers. The permeable pavers have many environmental benefits. Permeable pavers are better for air quality than asphalt, which has a high volatile organic compound component. They also reduce storm-water run off by allowing the water to be reabsorbed back into the ground.

Visit this Garden at
Green Depot Chicago Store
2500 N. Pulaski
Chicago, IL 60639

Evanston Unitarian Church

Visit this garden at
1330 Ridge Ave
Evanston, IL 60201-4199





The upper left picture was taken during the installation of the garden. The bottom left picture and the picture above were taken one month after installation in July 2009.

Museum of Science and Industry Smart Home Exhibit

Right Picture: Taken during installation of the garden.

Below: the Picture below was taken in June 2008 after the installation of the garden.





Above and Below: Picture were taken July 2009.



Village of Homer Glen

This garden was recently installed in June of 2009.



Wilbur Wright College



III. Helpful Websites

- Openlands: <http://www.openlands.org>
- Native Plants in the Home Landscape, a book published in 2004 by University of Illinois Extension <https://pubsplus.uiuc.edu/C1381.html>
- Prairie Gardens: Why Garden with Native Plants? from Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois <http://www.prairienet.org/gpf/prairiegardens.php>
- A list of nurseries that sell prairie plants from Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois <http://www.prairienet.org/gpf/nurseries.php>
- Nurseries and Seed Sources from the Illinois Native Plant Society http://www.ill-inps.org/index_files/Page436.htm
- Landscaping with Native Plants, from Chicago Wilderness <http://www.chicagowilderness.org/wildchi/landscape/index.cfm>
- The complete text of Bill McClain's excellent booklet entitled Prairie Establishment and Landscaping <http://dnr.state.il.us/conservation/naturalheritage/prairie/table.htm>
- Green Landscaping with Native Plants, from the US Environmental Protection Agency <http://www.epa.gov/greenacres/>
- Natural Handscaping for Public Officials: A Source Book prepared by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/greenacres/toolkit/>
- Native Plant Guide for Streams and Stormwater Facilities in Northeastern Illinois from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service <http://www.il.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/plants/npg/>

- Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes <http://www.for-wild.org/>
- Landscaping With Native Plants from The Wild Ones <http://www.for-wild.org/landscap.htm>
- Weed Laws and Native Plant Landscaping from The Wild Ones <http://www.for-wild.org/weedlaws/weedlaw.htm>
- Grow It! Don't Mow It! from The Wild Ones <http://www.for-wild.org/download/growit.html>
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, formerly the National Wildflower Research Center <http://www.wildflower.org/>
- Homepage for the McHenry County Defenders <http://www.mcdef.org/>
- Native Plant Information Network from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center <http://www.wildflower2.org/index.html>
- PlantNative: How to Naturescape http://www.plantnative.org/how_intro.htm
- Transcending the Garden: The American Prairie Experience, Ecological Gardening with Native North American Flowers and Grasses <http://www.sodaq.qc.ca/lectures/colloque-2001/diboll-en.html>