

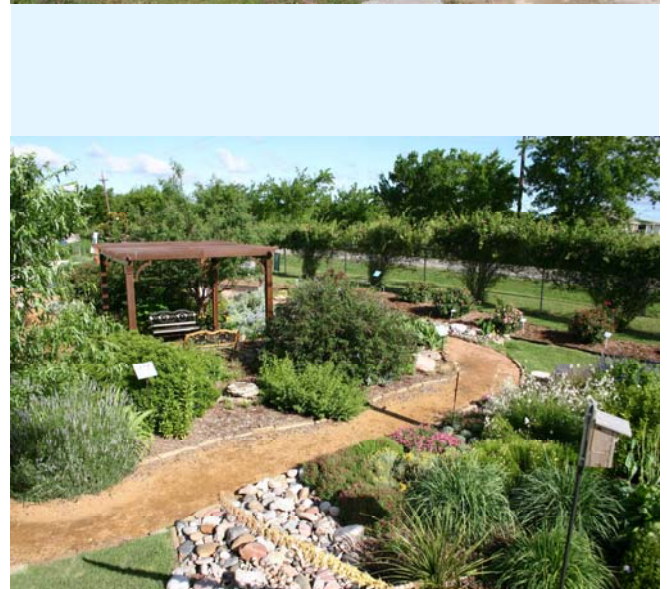
Rockwall County Master Gardener Association

Trinity River Basin Environmental Restoration Initiative - Rockwall County Final Report



The Inquisitive Giant oversees his garden from one of the 2500 gallon water harvesting tanks that helps supply the 1/3 acre Rockwall County Discovery Garden.

Rockwall County Discovery Garden engages youth of all ages, offering exploration of subsurface water irrigation systems, water wise gardening, and all nat-u-ral gardening, while also showcasing water harvesting and the use of this precious resource.



Summary of Activities from 12/08 - 7/10

- **17 onsite trainings**
- **Feature Article in regional publications across the state of Texas**
- **Published 20 page full color brochure documenting opportunities in the Rockwall County Discovery Garden**
- **2 Tour of Gardens showcasing Storm Water Runoff Solutions and Water Catchment Opportunities**

Contacts Reached

- 10,680 reached through seasonal newsletters**
- 2,809 persons reached through onsite trainings**
- 703 reached through Garden Tours**
- 82 Corporate Collaborators - Tour of Gardens Brochure Sponsors**
- 2 Government/Municipalities Collaborators**

During the past two years, the Rockwall County Master Gardener Association (RCMGA) has been working diligently educating the public about water literacy. Through the grant received from the Trinity River Basin Environmental Restoration Initiative, RCMGA was able to equip their outdoor learning center with water harvesting units. From the \$5000 grant, two 2500 gallon tanks were purchased. An accredited company, RainWater Harvesting Systems, located in Rockwall County, worked in a collaborative effort to secure the tanks, set them up, make needed connections to the existing structure and retro fit the irrigation system to utilize the rain water as available.

RCMGA received training on the system in late June 2009 and infused this information into already existing trainings and public education programming. 17 onsite trainings were held reaching more than 2,800 people. These trainings included but were not exclusive to topics of rainwater harvesting, stormwater runoff, water wise gardening, and EarthKind™ bed preparation strategies and recommended planting materials.

Trainings were held for youth specific audiences and adult specific audiences, each addressing the issues on appropriate skill levels. The following is a compilation of highlighted activities and trainings held:

- March 2009 - Rockwall Youth Fair School Day and Open Garden Days
- May 2009 - Rockwall County Tour of Gardens
- May 2009 - Teamed up with Rockwall Toyota for LEAD tours
- June 2009 - Installation of Water Harvesting Tanks
- June 2009 - RCMGA Water Harvesting 101 Training
- June 2009 - Regional Master Gardener CEU Training
- July 2009 - Extension Stakeholder Training
- July 2009 - Featured in Regional publications across the state
- July 2009 - Rockwall Rotary Presentation
- August 2009 - 13 Essential Steps DayCare Field Trip
- September 2009 - Publishing of Rockwall County Discovery Garden Brochure
- October 2009 - Open Garden Day / One Day 4-H
- November 2009 - Montessori School Field Day
- March 2010 - Rockwall Youth Fair School Day and Open Garden Day
- April 2010 - Area Bible Study Classes Field Trips
- April 2010 - Texas Master Gardener Association Conference Post Tour
- May 2010 - Rockwall County Tour of Gardens
- Commissioners Court presentations and gallery
- 6 quarterly newsletters containing Water wise matters

Water Harvesting 101



EarthKind™ techniques reduce water usage

Teaching even the youngest generation assists in the use of our natural resources



Discussion of drainage issues both above and below ground

2010 Texas Master Gardener Association conference Post Tour to Rockwall County



2009 and 2010 Rockwall County Tour of Gardens Showcase Storm Water Runoff Solutions and Rain Water Management Solutions

The sixth and seventh annual Tour of Gardens in Rockwall County showcased water management options. On May 14, 2009, Rockwall County tour goers witnessed first hand the use and practice of dry creek beds. Even though these creek beds provide aesthetic appeal to the eye, they provided much more during the event. For the majority of the tour, the skies opened up and provided Rockwall County with much needed rain. From the precipitation, avid gardeners were able to see dry creek beds in use validating their value in home landscapes and gaining insight to the importance of slope, swells, banking materials and planted materials. Tour goers were also able to visually calculate the possibilities of water capture from the two newly placed water harvesting tanks secured from the grant received.

During the seventh Annual Tour of Gardens, participants observed homeowner sized water harvesting tanks and the ingenious system constructed by the homeowner who is also an engineer. Remarks from the viewers indicated that this fun, architectural feature would be something to consider for personal use. With a whimsy approach the tank was affectionately name Kermit and was a highlight for many tour participants.

Rockwall County Tour of Gardens has averaged over 450 yearly for 7 years. It is a major educational program hosted by the Rockwall County Master Gardener Association showcasing from 5 to 7 sites yearly. The concurrent sessions are spread across the county in a learn at leisure approach. Each year the tour addresses important environmental issues such as reduction in water usage, composting, water harvesting, recommended plant materials, recommended planting techniques and more.





Program Strength through Partnerships

Partnerships for programming have come in many formats for water literacy. In June of 2009 Living Magazine, a local periodical, published a feature article on gardening showcasing the Rockwall County Discovery Garden and discussing the use of specific plant materials for moisture specific needs. The article was picked up across the state and used by other localized periodicals as well. This coverage was witnessed first hand by a Rockwall County Master Gardener visiting the Houston area. While there she was thumbing through a local periodical and realized the garden discussed was the one in her home county.

Local Blog Sites have picked up the information and are using it to inform potential home owners of resources in the county for natural resource education.

From the support of the Rockwall County Commissioners Court, a 20 page full color publication was produced to educate county residents about the Rockwall County Discovery Garden and the research and data collection from specific plant materials, water harvesting and usage issues, disease and insect control as well as other issues.

During the past two years more than 82 corporate sponsorships have been secured to match and exceed the grant received from the Trinity River Basin Environmental Restoration Initiative, assuring a local vested interest in water literacy.

