

Organizing, Advertising, and Implementing Backyard Conservation Programs & Workshops

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Overview of Hamilton County's BYC Program

- Started initial organizational work in July 2006
 - Really “up & running” in fall 2007
- We promote small changes in urban landscapes to improve soil and water quality and create or enhance wildlife habitat.
- 3 components of the program:
 - **Education**
 - Workshops, demo sites, tip sheets
 - **Technical Assistance**
 - Site visits & conservation plans
 - **Financial Assistance**
 - Cost-share dollars



Steering Committee

- Average 10-12 members
- Met monthly in the beginning, now (in 3rd full year), we meet quarterly
- Group is a sounding board
 - Help decide what are timely, interesting topics for workshops and avoid conflicts with similar events
 - Help locate and find support for demo sites
 - Notify us of possible grant/funding opportunities
 - Advertise and promote the program
 - Give unique ideas
 - Allow Hamilton Co. SWCD to support like-minded organizations

Sponsor Sign-On

- Mail ~200 letters each November/December
 - **Businesses** (plant nurseries, landscapers, ecological consulting firms, rain barrel suppliers...)
 - **Government offices** (MS4 coordinators, county surveyor, development/community relations department, parks department...)
 - **Non-profit organizations** (native plant groups, wildlife organizations, outdoor recreation groups...)
- Average ~30 sponsors each year
 - Donations for printing, workshops, demo site supplies
 - Discounts for landowners fulfilling a Backyard Conservation Plan
 - Steering Committee
 - Demo Sites and Workshops



Demo Sites

- VERY important to see these sites in person
 - Individuals can visit on their own time
 - Great locations for before/during/after workshops
- Rain gardens, wildlife habitats, pond edge enhancements
- Neighborhood common areas, individual backyards, municipal properties, parks, places of worship
- Funding may come from grantors or donors (their logo on a sign), landowner, SWCD



Workshops



- 3-4 per year
- Always one in February
- In 2009 held 3 hands-on planting days = great success!
 - Volunteers gain experience
 - Free labor
 - Instant demo site
 - Photos & publicity for your program
- Team up with parks, MS4s, and other sponsors for sites, refreshments, advertising, speakers
 - Has kept costs low enough to offer all workshops free of charge to the public

Presentations to Community Groups

- Kiwanis, Lions, garden clubs, 4-H groups, girlscouts/boyscouts, watershed groups, local TV stations, and many more
- Always looking for speakers (preferably at no charge)
- Great way to promote the program to audiences that might not otherwise know about you
- Often leads to more speaking commitments, demo sites, or funding opportunities



Site Visits & Conservation Plans

- Free site visits in Hamilton County
 - 30-45 minutes
 - Discuss goals/objectives and possibilities
- Written conservation plan, including:
 - Map of recommendations
 - Species recommendations
 - Planting/maintenance specifications
 - Contractor lists
 - Cost estimates



Cost-Share Assistance



- Some funding from SWCD “leftover” budget
- Grants
- Very important to set maximums and priorities

Annual Award Program

- Will be starting in 2010
- Categories:
 - Homeowner
 - Homeowner association
 - Business
 - Non-Profit Group
 - Development
- Timeline
 - Publicize all year
 - Applications due in October
 - Winners announced in December



- Prizes
 - Rain Barrel
 - Birdhouses
 - Native Plants
 - Park Concert Tickets



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