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Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



March 2021

By Layne Knoche, Visiting Extension Outreach Associate

Welcome to The Red Oak Rain Garden's monthly newsletter!

The [Red Oak Rain Garden \(RORG\) Team](#) produces this e-newsletter monthly to keep our supporters up to date on everything that's going on at the garden. We are excited to announce that we continue to make progress on the community stewardship challenge grant thanks to your generous support.

We value your time and if you would not like to receive future communications, please click unsubscribe at the bottom of this email to opt-out.



Heavy February snow at the Red Oak Rain Garden. Photo by Layne Knoche.

Public Engagement

Blogs

- [In the Garden: February](#)

Social Media Highlights

- Winter Highlights Series wrapped up with a spotlight on Red Twig Dogwood.
- Celebrated [Valentine's Day](#), [Mardi Gras](#), [Black History Month](#), and [Lunar New Year](#).
- [Mulch Madness](#), which raked in over 64,000 views last year, will occur again this March. Planning and preparation have taken and the tournament will begin on March 16th.

RORG Student Team

The RORG Team [welcomed](#) Sandra Bjerga, Communications Major, to the [Student Team](#). Sandra has been helping to plan and prepare for the upcoming [Mulch Madness](#) native plant competition and will be involved in a large portion of RORG's social media in the coming months.

Presentations

RORG Landscape Designer Layne Knoche was featured in two episodes of Extension's *Good Growing* podcast for a discussion on favorite native plants. Specially featured was RORG's Red Chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*).

Progress toward Community Stewardship Challenge Grant

In partnership with the [Champaign County Design & Conservation Foundation](#), RORG received a Community Stewardship Challenge Grant from the [Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation](#) (ICECF). This grant helps natural areas establish relationships with new donors and/or to raise new support that can be directed towards stewardship. They match donations 3:1 up to \$7,000 and provide \$6,000 for volunteer hours for a total of \$32,000. **In January, we met our fundraising goal of \$7,000! As of February 28, we have recorded 265 volunteer hours of the 400 we need by August 31.**

Progress towards Community Stewardship Challenge Grant

Volunteer Stewardship

 Volunteer Hours:
265 of 400 needed for ICECF Grant

 Social Media Hours:
104 of 100 needed for ICECF Grant

Fundraising

 Total Raised:
\$7,000 of \$7,000 needed for ICECF Grant

In the Garden

January Activity

- **Plant Life**

Songbirds, especially Robins, were seen finishing off the remaining berries from Winterberry and Red Chokeberry, which is typical for late-winter. A mid-month snowstorm brought the season's biggest snowfall, with around 8 inches. The deep blanket of snow and sun the following day highlighted beautiful shadows cast by the Red Oak and Sycamore trees, as well as the various shrubs throughout the garden.

- **Monitoring**

Precipitation: 2.05" of liquid-equivalent precipitation was reported by the CoCoRaHS rain gauge watchers for the month.

- **Red Oak Health**

Extension Horticulture Educator [Ryan Pankau](#) is finalizing plans to apply mycorrhizae and

Cambistat around the Red Oak and is working with F&S. These will be applied in early spring and will be accompanied by a guest blog to explain the importance of these practices.

- ***Boardwalk Bridge Update***

RORG Director Eliana Brown and volunteer Shannon Tucker report that we're on track to build the boardwalk bridge late-May/early-June. Micah Putman of Allerton Park has delivered Black Locust trees to The Woodshop, a local lumber mill, where they'll be cut into lumber. With February's below-average temperatures, milling has delayed slightly but should start back up once temperatures allow for it.

What to Watch for in March

Signs of returning plant life can be seen by mid-March. Watch for the various species of sedges to begin greening up. The tulips, Virginia Bluebells, and other spring ephemerals planted last fall will start to emerge with the first warm spell.

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

The Red Oak Rain Garden team seeks volunteers to help wake up the garden for the 2021 growing season! With spring just around the corner, volunteers will gain first-hand experience in early-season rain garden maintenance and will have the opportunity to work with dozens of native plant species. Masks will be required. Thanks to our wonderful supporters, newly purchased tools will be provided, but feel free to bring along your favorite rake or pruning shears. Weather permitting, workdays will occur:

- Wednesday, March 17th from 1:00-4:00 pm
- Thursday, March 18th from 4:30-6:30 pm
- Friday, March 19th from 1:00-4:00 pm

Interested? Email Layne Knoche: lknoch2@illinois.edu.



The Red Oak at the garden casts a shadow on a sunny, snowy day. Photo by Layne Knoche.

Support the Red Oak Rain Garden

Red Oak Rain Garden | redoakraingarden@gmail.com

The Red Oak Rain Garden (RORG) is **located** on the University of Illinois Urbana campus between Allen Hall and McKinley Health Center. The RORG Team works for **Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant** and **University of Illinois Extension**.

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