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Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



October 2021

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.

Fall 2021 has proven to be a vibrant time for RORG! UIUC students are back on campus, and many are experiencing the garden for the first time. Several students have reached out to us to volunteer! Happily, Landscape Designer Layne Knoche had great service-learning opportunities for them and our community volunteers with the installation of hundreds of new plants. Read below about all the exciting improvements. And we invite you to see them yourself; check out the "What to Watch for in October" section so you can plan your next visit to the garden.

Warmly,

Eliana Brown, RORG Director



Students from various classes and campus groups gained hands-on experience this fall at RORG. Photos by Eliana Brown and Layne Knoche.

Public Engagement

Volunteer Highlights:

Regular workdays occur each Friday from 9:00-11:00am, weather dependent. The RORG Team and regular volunteers have continued to welcome and train new volunteers from the Champaign County Master Gardeners and East Central Illinois Master Naturalist programs. Several volunteer workdays took place throughout September. See “Fall 2021 Projects” below.

Fall 2021 Projects:

With funds from the [Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation Community Stewardship Challenge Grant](#), the RORG team expanded the rain garden with an additional 1,400 plants and installed several trees between RORG and the McKinley Health Center parking lot. Work is ongoing around the Dorner Drive Retention Pond to convert what had been poor quality low-mow with high-quality native vegetation.

Champaign County Master Gardener & East Central Illinois Master Naturalist volunteers, UIUC students from Landscape Architecture and Horticulture, Girl Scout Troop #2915, and the student

organizations of ASLA and SWE participated in the installation and gained valuable hands-on experience at RORG.

Blogs

- [In the Garden: September](#)
- [Improving Campus Sustainability One Green Space at a Time](#) (updated)

Social Media Highlights

- Celebrated [Latinx Heritage Month](#), [Earth Wind & Fire Day](#), [Karen Folk's Birthday](#), and the [fall equinox](#).
- Other popular posts included a [call for volunteers](#) post and the arrival of [native seed mixes](#) for the ongoing Dorner Drive Retention Pond project.

Presentations & Tours

- Guided tours were given to Girl Scout Troop #2915, [LA 390](#), LA 452, HORT 344, and the Student Chapter of UIUC ASLA.
- Eliana and Layne were guests on Extension's [Good Growing.podcast](#).

Fundraising

Now that the bridge has been built, our fundraising focus shifts to the installation of an interpretive sign that explains what a rain garden is, as well as the general history of the Red Oak Rain Garden. If you're interested in supporting this phase of the project, click [here](#).



RORG Volunteers and participants in the newly integrated Rainscaping Program worked in the garden this fall.
Photos by Eliana Brown, Tana Willaredt, and Layne Knoche.

In the Garden

September Activity

- ***Plant Life***

Summer blooms began to fade as the fall season took over. However, the warm temperatures and typical precipitation have kept a few summer stragglers around, such as Cardinal Flower and Tall Bellflower. These species are blooming unusually late this year. Asters, Black Eyed Susan, and White Turtlehead are currently in peak bloom. [See our full plant library.](#)

- ***Monitoring***

Precipitation: Our [CoCoRaHS](#) rain gauge watchers reported 3.04 inches of precipitation. The average for September is 3.10 inches.

- ***Field Guide Update***

The RORG Team worked with Extension's Justin Klett on developing a handheld field guide to be used by volunteers working in the garden. The guide will include species identification cards for all of RORG's plant species, including new species added this fall. Identification cards for a variety of weeds known to be in the garden will be created as well.

What to Watch for in October

Our native shrubs such as Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) and Red Chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*) will begin their fall color displays in the second half of the month. Fall blooming native species like Smooth Blue Aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*) and Black Eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia fulgida*) will continue their floral shows, even through our first frosts and freezes that typically occur in the second half of the month.

Nearby trees will begin to change color towards the end of the month, as well. In particular, Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), located around the Dorner Drive Retention Pond just to the south of the garden, are so beautiful in the fall that we decided to plant three new ones just east of the garden. We also installed three new Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) trees on the southeast side of the garden, as well as several Bottlebrush Buckeyes (*Aesculus parviflora*). The combination of these new trees and shrubs will add to the beautiful fall color we already had in the area!

Pollinators will still be very active through at least the first half of the month, as they prepare for the upcoming winter. Migrating birds have been seen in and around the garden, and the last of the Monarch Butterflies can be seen as they make their way south to Mexico, where they will overwinter.

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

The garden is being kept beautiful with the help of volunteers from the [Champaign County Master Gardeners](#) and [East Central Illinois Master Naturalists](#), who have started a regular workday each Friday morning from 9:00-11:00am. Volunteers are needed throughout the growing season to help with various garden-care activities. If you are interested in participating, check out our [Volunteers hub](#) on the website, send us an email at redoakraingarden@gmail.com, or contact us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [Twitter](#).



Smooth Blue Aster in bloom at the Red Oak Rain Garden. 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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