# *Thank you for your commitment to green initiatives at the University of Illinois. One of the ongoing requirements listed in the terms of the funding agreement for your project is the submission of semesterly reports with key information about your project. In addition to this form, please provide additional financial documentation and/or progress photos if available.*

# *Please be as accurate as possible in describing the project (including possible setbacks or challenges in meeting the initial goals of the project). Not fully meeting your project's goals will not disqualify you from making future funding requests as long as your reports are as complete and accurate as possible. If you have any questions, please contact the Student Sustainability Committee, at* *sustainability-committee@illinois.edu**.*

**Project Name:** Red Oak Rain Garden 2.0 and Sidewalks

**Date of Report Submission:** 5/14/2021

**Project Purpose:**

The project’s purpose is to renovate the Red Oak Rain Garden with several key outcomes in mind. First, the garden will continue to be effective in its role of absorbing and filtering stormwater. Second, the plantings will be native to Illinois. This increases their hardiness and attractiveness to pollinators and birds. Plants have been chosen based on their seasonal interest to ensure the garden’s visual appeal over all four seasons. Finally, the garden will be an inspirational and educational resource for students (in and out of the classroom), faculty, visitors, and community members.

**Detailed Accounting of Expenditures to Date:**

See attached spreadsheet.

**Project Progress to Date:**

Phase I (Demo and Prep) has reached substantial completion.

Phase II (Plant Installation) has reached substantial completion.

Phase III (Boardwalk bridge and Sign) is in progress and was delayed by material issues related to covid-19. As of the date of this submittal, the sustainably-sourced timber from Allerton Park is currently being milled by a local wood shop. The bridge is scheduled to begin construction the first week in June.

See <https://redoakraingarden.org/blog/> for the latest information.

**Student Involvement and Outreach to Date:**

As was detailed in the 2017 application, this project began with students, has continued with students, and is designed for the benefit of current and future students.

The garden and its sculpture were designed and built by NRES and FAA students 14 years ago. When the revitalization project began, Landscape Architecture grad student Cameron Letterly held two student-attended stakeholder meetings and performed initial site analysis and design work. In 2019, a new team of Landscape Architecture students, undergraduate student Layne Knoche and grad student Kayla Myers, worked on the planting plan.

Art Education grad student Katrina Widholm created watercolor artwork of wildlife that the garden plants support, which were featured on RORG greeting cards. Civil Engineering PhD student Reshmina William, helped the project install monitoring equipment. Urban Planning grad student Tony Heath, who holds a professional engineering license, joined the project and completed engineering design. Much of this work received professional review, which was a win-win for the students and the project.

In fall 2019, approximately 100 students from the following classes helped install 9,000 native plants during service learning events: HORT 100, HORT 344, and LA 452.

During fall 2020, 4 EVST 492 students became RORG’s first Student Team, working with the RORG Team to measure stormwater infiltration and create student-focused social media outreach. For a recap of the semester, see: [RORG’s First Student Team: A Recap of the Fall 2020 Semester (redoakraingarden.org)](https://redoakraingarden.org/2020/12/17/rorgs-first-student-team-a-recap-of-the-fall-2020-semester/)

Communications Student Sandra Bjerga is the Spring 2021 Student Team member. She ran our successful “[Mulch Madness](https://redoakraingarden.org/2021/03/05/mulch-madness-2021-hold-onto-your-gardening-hats-sports-fans/)” educational social media campaign and helped with blogs.

RORG also provided several service learning opportunities in the fall of 2020, with 35 students from HORT and LA classes and from Allen Hall and Greenhouse. This spring 6 students from the ASLA Student Chapter worked with Layne Knoche to install plants.

**Marketing and Promotion Efforts to Date:**

Our team brings awareness and publicizes our project using our social media platforms - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok - all with the handle @RainGardenUIUC. We have student, staff, and faculty followers and interact with them daily. Outreach Associate Kate Gardiner is running these platforms as part of her job duties at Extension.

Our website, redoakraingarden.org, features an active blog. Outreach Associate Layne Knoche (who completed his degree and now works for Extension) produces the website’s weekly garden report: <https://redoakraingarden.org/this-week-in-the-garden/>

**Additional Comments:**

RORG and associated spaces received two Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation Grants of $32,000 and $5,500.

Spring 2020, the garden received certifications from several ecological organizations. More info at: <https://redoakraingarden.org/2020/07/29/were-certified/>