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rain, rain, don't go away

We did it together!



The Millers Creek Rainwater Project

Walking Tour Wednesday, June 23 — Details inside!

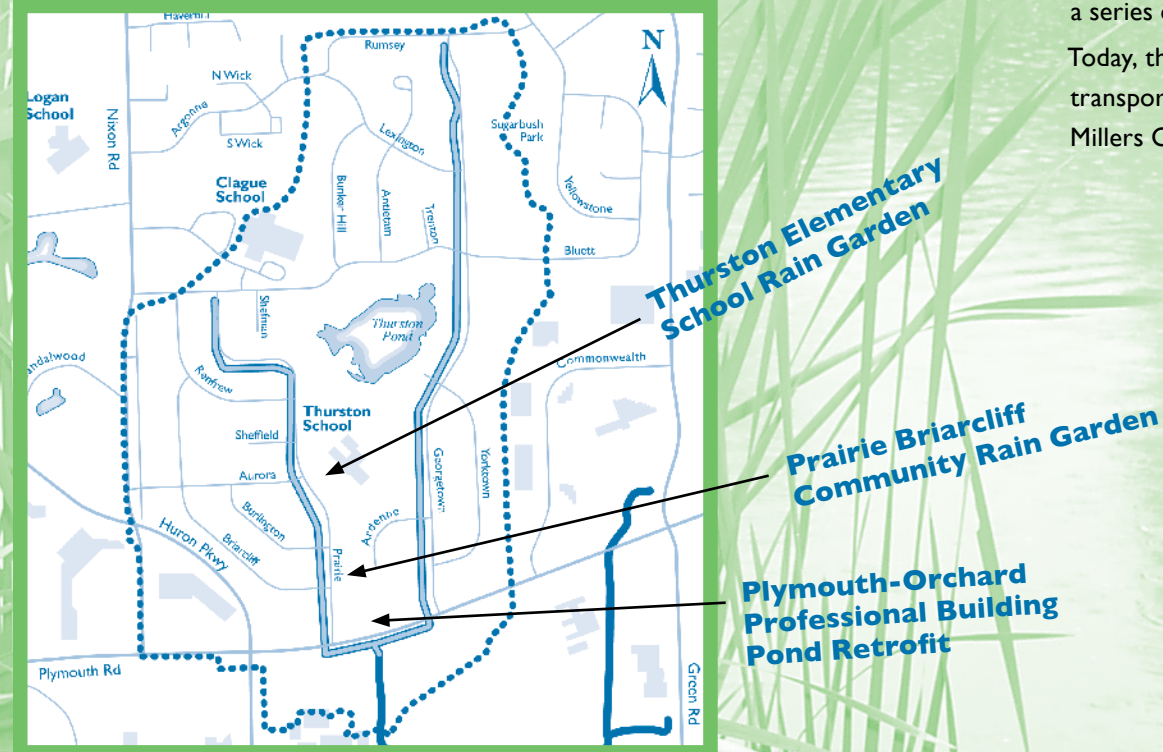


Millers Creek is a special place. It has been described as “a touch of wilderness winding through an urban landscape.” Located entirely within the City of Ann Arbor, the creek is home to a variety of wildlife, including green heron, turtles and crayfish. Millers Creek also features dramatic topography and is the steepest creek in the Huron River System, dropping an average of 50 feet per mile.

You are an important part of the Millers Creek story! Your neighborhood comprises the headwaters of Millers Creek. A natural headwaters area typically includes marshy areas, wetlands, ponds and tributaries—all features that help store rainwater. When your neighborhood was built these natural storage areas were replaced with streets and houses. The headwaters and much of Millers Creek were redirected underground, through a series of pipes.

Today, this storm drain system transports rainwater directly into Millers Creek.

The system converges into a single pipe from which the creek first emerges, above ground, just south of Plymouth Road. As a result, water pollution and volatile creek flows cause problems for the creek overall. During storms, flow rates can increase up to 300-fold, substantially eroding the stream banks. Runoff from the headwaters neighborhood also yields the highest concentrations of bacteria, phosphorus, and salts measured in Millers Creek.



Join Us for a Walking Tour of the Project Gardens!
Wednesday, June 23, 2010, 7pm
Meet at the Thurston Elementary School Rain Garden, 2300 Prairie Street, Ann Arbor

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The Millers Creek Rainwater Project

is a 3-year effort to reduce erosion and pollution in Millers Creek caused by urban rainwater runoff, and measure the effectiveness of using residential techniques for capturing rainwater. The project is funded by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and run by the Huron River Watershed Council. You and your neighbors joined us in creating rain gardens, setting up rain barrels, re-directing downspouts onto grassy areas and planting trees. We had help along the way from the City of Ann Arbor, JFNew, the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner and many others. At the intersection of Briarcliff and Prairie Streets, we replaced an unused paved road stub with a 5,000 square foot rain garden.



This was a unique opportunity to remove a large impervious surface that was contributing to the high flow problems of Millers Creek, and replace it with a garden that catches, infiltrates, and cleans rainwater.

In June of 2009, more than twenty neighborhood residents dedicated a Saturday to plant the garden with 2,000 native plants and trees.

The **Prairie Briarcliff** community rain garden

now catches rainwater runoff from a 41,000 square foot area along Prairie Street—water that would otherwise flood into Millers Creek through the storm drains.



At **Thurston Elementary School** we converted a grassy depression that was receiving rainwater runoff from the school's roof into a 1,400 square foot rain garden.

The site's heavy clays were replaced with a rich porous soil and then planted with water-loving native plants by several neighborhood volunteers and three third-grade classes from Thurston.

As a result, the rain that runs off the Thurston School roof now flows through the rain garden, infiltrates through the soil, and is taken up by the plants.

A third project restored a non-functioning retention pond at the **Plymouth-Orchard Professional Building**.

We modified the concrete outlet structure so that the pond would work better to hold and clean the stormwater it catches from the Georgetown neighborhood and release it more slowly into Millers Creek. We also planted the pond's banks with water-loving deep-rooted native plants that will take up even more rainwater runoff.

We distributed **over 75 rain barrels** to project area homeowners. When put to use, these barrels potentially hold back 4,500 gallons of water each time it rains.



Along with the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner, we helped three families and the congregation at the Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church build rain gardens in their own yards.

The Millers Creek Rainwater Project team is currently working to determine if our activities made a difference to Millers Creek.

HRWC volunteers are assessing the insects, habitat, and channel shape at two downstream locations: Plymouth Road and Glazier Way. This summer, the team will measure the amount and speed of water flowing down the creek when it rains. We will compare these measurements to our studies of water flow before the project improvements were put in place.



Learn more about HRWC by visiting www.hrwc.org.

Here's what you can do to continue helping Millers Creek.

Go to www.hrwc.org/millerscreek for tips, resources, and project details including maps and monitoring results.

Buy a rain barrel, or two, and use it to capture rainwater that otherwise runs off the hard surfaces on your property. Re-use the water for your yard and garden.



Make a rain garden on your property. Check www.hrwc.org/millerscreek for do-it-yourself resources or to apply to a money-saving residential rain garden program offered by the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner.

Use native plants when improving your landscape. Native plants are deep-rooted and help capture and infiltrate rainwater better than non-natives.

Re-direct and extend downspouts to your lawn and garden areas instead of down your driveway.

Use pervious pavement when repaving your driveway or patio.



This Nonpoint Source Pollution Control project has been funded through the Michigan Nonpoint Source Program by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.