

# SU's first rain garden built

Tuesday, April 13, 2010, *By News Staff*

Enthusiastic volunteers worked in bright sunshine and brisk winds on Saturday to help finish building the Waverly Rain Garden for its official unveiling on April 19 during SU Showcase. A total of 55 volunteers, mostly Syracuse University and SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry students, worked in shifts digging and moving dirt and placing plants to complete SU's first rain garden.



Besides letting the rain garden's plants grow and flourish, the final upcoming piece of this project is the official dedication. The Waverly Rain Garden dedication ceremony will be held on Monday, April 19, from 9-9:30 a.m., directly in front of the garden in the lower level of the Waverly parking lot. It is open to the public and a part of the daylong *SU Showcase* schedule of events. The ceremony will feature guest speakers and a temporary willow branch arch constructed by students and faculty in the College of Visual and Performing Arts.

This year's SU Showcase, restructured and focused around the theme of sustainability in recognition of the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, is a daylong program coordinated through the University's *Soling Program*. It will feature forums and activities revolving around the featured SU Showcase Fellows presentations on the Quad.

The Waverly Rain Garden will enhance campus sustainability by capturing and absorbing some of the Waverly lot's stormwater runoff. This will reduce the amount of rainwater entering storm drains and help lessen storm system overloads. The garden covers 400 square feet and is capable of capturing nearly 2,000 gallons of water.

Staff from SU's Physical Plant worked closely with the rain garden's designer, Nick Zubin-Stathopoulos, a SUNY-ESF landscape architecture graduate student, to excavate the site and construct a large stone retaining wall during the two weeks prior to Saturday's landscaping work.

"The garden looks good," says Zubin-Stathopoulos. "Physical Plant did a great job of getting the site ready. Allan Breese [SU's director of Business and Facilities Maintenance Services] and Eric Beattie [SU's director of the Office of Campus Planning, Design, and Construction] were very supportive of the project, and their staffs were extremely helpful and cooperative. They had a lot of great input. It was a good learning experience."

"It's fun to see all the enthusiastic students who are interested in this project," says Rachel May, SU's sustainability education coordinator and the driving force behind the rain garden's planning and design efforts. "This is a wonderful example of the best kind of collaboration that sustainability brings out."

Zubin-Stathopoulos hopes that, as a new campus sustainability feature, the Waverly Rain Garden will be used as a teaching tool for students. The garden's low-maintenance design, including the use of groundcover instead of sod, is one of its key sustainable elements. However, a crucial part of fostering this will be regular weeding so that the groundcover can quickly become established. Zubin-Stathopoulos and May are currently recruiting volunteers to help weed the garden once a month.

For more information about the Waverly Rain Garden dedication ceremony, or to volunteer to help periodically weed the garden, contact May at [enspire@syr.edu](mailto:enspire@syr.edu) or 443-9726.