

## Rain Gardens

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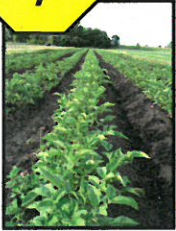
A rain garden is designed to collect water that runs off your roof or water discharged from your sump pump. Rain gardens are planted with native wetland or wet-prairie wildflowers and grasses which help filter and clean runoff before infiltrating it into the ground. This restores underground water supplies, keeps runoff out of storm drains, helps protect water quality in local lakes and streams, and reduces water use in your yard. Rain gardens are low maintenance and also provide food and shelter for wildlife.



Interested in planting your own rain garden? Please take a rain garden brochure.

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## Green Earth Institute



Forty-nine of the sixty acres at McDonald Farm are leased by Green Earth Institute, a nonprofit educational organization established to promote environmental sustainability and nutritional health. The organic farm is used as a Community Supported Agriculture program (CSA), where they grow healthy vegetables in an earth-friendly way for their shareholders and educate about nature, nutrition, and caring for the earth.

To learn more about Green Earth Institute pick up brochures inside The Conservation Foundation's office or visit their website at [www.GreenEarthInstitute.org](http://www.GreenEarthInstitute.org)

## Wetlands Restoration

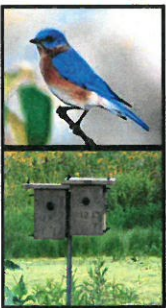
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Over the past few centuries significant amounts of wetlands have been removed or destroyed. In an effort to reverse this trend, TCF has created a wetland restoration project right here on the farm. Wetlands are vital to water conservation in Illinois. The natural movement of water through a wetland is slow, allowing the rich vegetation to remove nutrient contamination, other pollutants, and suspended sediment from the water. Wetlands also serve as natural habitats for a wide variety of wildlife, provide natural water reservoirs for excess stormwater, and help decrease the risk of flooding in the immediate area.



To learn more about the importance of wetlands, please visit [www.wetlands-initiative.org](http://www.wetlands-initiative.org)

## Bluebird Monitoring



Notice we have placed nesting boxes around the farm to encourage nesting of bluebirds and other beneficial species. We regularly monitor each box and record all species using the boxes during breeding season. We remove the nests of non-native invasive species, such as house sparrows. Monitoring of these boxes gives bluebirds a better chance of survival. The Eastern Bluebird is very beneficial to us and was once very common in the United States. However, over the last century their numbers have diminished due to loss of nesting habitat and competition from European birds. In earlier years of agriculture, wooden fence posts provided bluebird nesting cavities, but most wooden posts have either been replaced by metal posts or removed altogether. Please do not disturb the bird boxes.

To learn more about bluebirds or bluebird boxes visit <http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/> or [www.nestwatch.org](http://www.nestwatch.org)

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## Water Garden



Water gardens are visually soothing and connect people to the natural world. The aesthetic value of water gardens is enhanced by the almost endless variety of design and planting options. A water garden is not only a nice cosmetic feature, but it also attracts a variety of wildlife, such as birds, frogs, and dragonflies. What makes our garden unique is that we use native plantings and we do not use chemicals, which attracts larger numbers of wildlife than the typical water garden. Donated by Aquascape Designs, Inc.