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## Richland County experts say gardens can fight floods

By JAMI KINTON  
News Journal

MANSFIELD -- When it comes to reducing flooding, experts say forget old draining traditions.

"We used to just try to get the water off the grounds as quickly as possible," Kingwood Center director Chuck Gleaves said. "But all the hard surfaces we have just create a surge into the streams. The old tradition was to just direct the water into the storm sewers and straighten the streams to get the water moving faster."



During the last few years, Gleaves said, research has shown it is more effective to slow the water on site with a rain garden.

Gleaves described a rain garden as a planted area designed to absorb rainwater runoff from impenetrable urban areas such as roofs, driveways and compacted lawn areas. He said this reduces rain runoff by allowing water to soak into the ground.

"You would plant something with deeper roots like perennials or shrubs, which will help soak up the water and hold the soil and water in place when it rains," he said. "Then the rain garden will distribute the water over the course of about two to three days, instead of having everything run straight to the gutters."

water that becomes sewer water.

Local gardener and Mohican Audubon President Cheryl Harner said the method would significantly reduce the amount of storm

"Storm water is not sewer water until it reaches the sewers, and it is very expensive to process it," she said. "The rain gardens will definitely help to not even let it get there, because once it does, then that water is contaminated."

Gleaves said small scattered rain gardens would positively affect an entire city.

"I was in an area of Wisconsin and about every third house had a rain garden, and they reduced their storm water down to zero," he said.

When creating a rain garden, Harner said, homeowners should create the gardens away from homes so the water does not drain into basements.

"The gardens can actually help the water from going into basements if they're done right," she said.

Gleaves said Kingwood plans to install six to seven rain gardens around its property.

"You get a lot of water quality problems when you have the fast runoff," Harner said. "You're collecting all this water on parking lots and when it runs off, it's moving at a very high velocity. Rain gardens will allow the rain water to go through the water tables at a normal rate and make things more natural."

Harner suggested a 100-square-foot rain garden for a regular-sized, city lot yard.

"We know that trees and plants stop erosion," Harner said. "This is really just an attractive way to garden and be functional."

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