



Riparian Corridor Project Profile



Nankin Mills Interpretive Center Grow Zone Project

Background

In early 2005, Wayne County Parks made a commitment to improve water quality and wildlife habitat in Edward Hines Park, the largest riparian park in Wayne County. In partnership with Wayne County Department of Environment, they received a grant through the Clean Michigan Initiative to convert 13 acres of turf grass into native landscape. The 4.6 acre Nankin Mills site was selected as a priority site due to its proximity to the Nankin Mills Interpretive Center and its high visibility to park visitors. This portion of the Rouge River suffers from flooding and soil erosion during storm events. This area in Hines Park has shallow rooted grass, which allows most of the storm water to drain directly into the river with little or no infiltration. Native prairie grasses and wildflowers are deep rooted, encourage infiltration and assists the soil in storage of storm water runoff. This project began in Spring 2006 and was completed in Spring 2007.

The grow zone demonstration shows many benefits and opportunities that the use of native plants can create. For this project, the grow zone is an area where turf grass was removed, the soil properly prepared and native plantings installed and established. The Nankin Mills Interpretive Center Grow Zone Project focuses on providing wildlife habitat and a riparian buffer, while being visually attractive. This is one of 12 grow zone projects located along Edward Hines Drive that highlights, to both staff and citizens, the benefits of native plants and riparian buffers.



Nankin Mills Interpretive Center Grow Zone project area, before seeding (left) and after (right). (Pictures - M. Best)

Project Overview

Karen Gorman, of Design Resource Associates, designed the grow zone and planting plan. Wayne County Parks staff eliminated the existing turf grass and seed bank on 4.6 acres of Hines Park by herbiciding and tilling. There were three separate areas of the grow zone and all were shallow tilled. The area adjacent to the Rouge River was hand broadcast seeded and planted by Ford Motor Company Volunteers. The area to the east of the Interpretive Center was hand broadcast seeded by Ford Motor Company Volunteers and planted by students from St. Valentine's School in Redford. The area adjacent to the pond was planted by students from Edison Elementary School in Westland. WCI Contractors installed an interpretive kiosk that explained the grow zone's purpose and function. Occasional mowing and managing for invasive species is the only maintenance procedures anticipated. Research on native landscapes suggest the maintenance cost for 4.6 acres of grow zone will be approximately 80% less than managing the previous turf grass land cover.

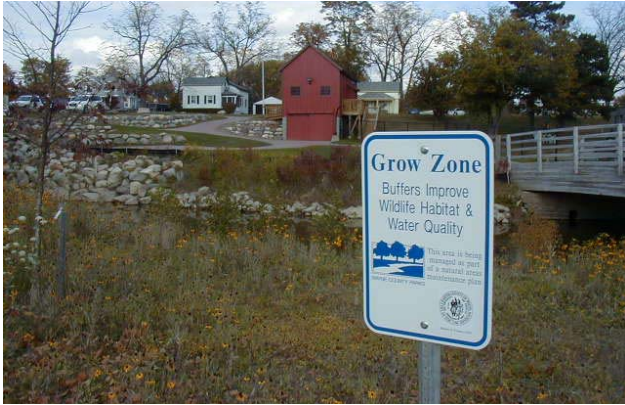
A list of the 60 plus native plant species used is available upon request. The species mix was specific to match the habitat of the planted area. Planted native trees and shrubs along with grow zone signage help to delineate the Grow Zone as a managed, important part of the Edward Hines Park. This project has become a welcome addition to the Park's natural environment.

Methods Used

- Native Plantings
- Hand Seed Broadcast Method

Materials Used

- Herbicide, Tractor and Seed Drill
- Shovels, rakes, landscape mulch
- Design Consultant Services
- 59 trees and shrubs and 52 lbs of native plant seed
- 11 large grow zone sign w/ logo decal and 22 small grow zone boundary signs.
- Full Color Ceramic Surface Interpretive Kiosk



The grow zone signs and interpretive kiosk provide a sense of place and purpose for visitors to the Interpretive Center. (Picture - M. Best)



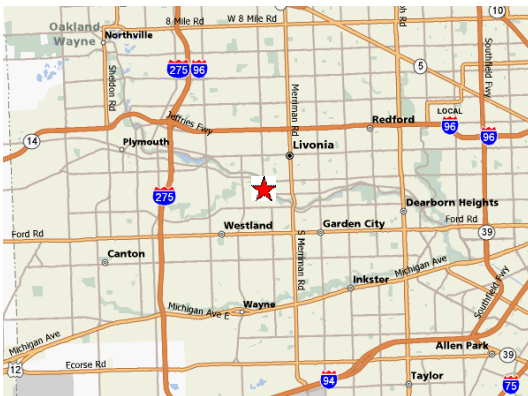
Over 60 native plant species were used in the project. Here foxglove beard-tongue, lance-leaf coreopsis and black eyed susan bloom in the St. Valentine's school planted section of the grow zone three months after installation (Picture - M. Best)

Cost

The total cash cost of the project was \$18,119. This cost covered the design, plant material, seed, signage and herbicide. The site cost was higher than other sites due to the installation of a interpretive kiosk (\$8,900). The site benefited by having Wayne County Master Gardeners, Ford Motor Company, St Valentine's School students, Edison Elementary School students and Wayne County provide in-kind service for the physical preparation and installation of the planting area. This project was part of a larger Grow Zone effort that took place across Edward Hines Park in the Spring and Summer of 2006.

Permits

None



59 fourth graders from Edison Elementary School in Westland volunteered their time to help install the Grow Zone. Students planted 59 trees and shrubs around the pond. (Picture - M. Best)

Partners

Wayne County Master Gardeners, St Valentine's School students, Edison Elementary School students, Ford Motor Company, Wildtype Nursery, Osenbaugh Seed, Nativescape, Design Resource Associates, Wayne County Parks and Wayne County Department of Environment.



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Text and photographs supplied by Matthew R. Best. For more information on this project, please contact Matthew R. Best at Wayne County's Department of Environment - (734) 326-3936

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