

Saturday, Oct. 25, 2008

# Raising awareness: Rain garden rolls many lessons into one area

By Steve Palisin - [spalisin@thesunnews.com](mailto:spalisin@thesunnews.com)

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A group of fourth- and fifth-graders at Burgess Elementary School had more than green thumbs Wednesday.

They all had brown hands and smiles from helping plant a rain garden in back of the school. They took part in a community awareness project about preventing stormwater runoff to better protect area waterways.

In the middle of this sunken garden, an oval about 20-by-50 feet, Jason Burzler of Creekside Landscaping in Murrells Inlet had three students helping with planting.

More info For details on a rain-garden plant list - suggested trees, ornamental grasses, sedges/rushes, shrubs and perennials - contact county Clemson Extension offices in Conway at 365-6715 or Georgetown at 546-4481; call the Coastal Waccamaw Stormwater Education Consortium at 349-4058; or visit [www.cwsec-sc.org](http://www.cwsec-sc.org)



Dylan Howell, Callie Moss and Haleigh Startin, all 9, learned why bulldozing a moatlke ring around a magnolia tree gives it a circular dam that can hold and absorb water after rainfall.

Besides the ecological benefits Dylan and Haleigh brought up as they spread mulch by the tree, Callie voiced her favorite part of the process: "What I like about it is getting dirty."

Karen Fuss, coordinator of the Coastal Waccamaw Stormwater Education Consortium and a marine and wetland studies environmental educator at Coastal Carolina University, said the project had a two-prong effect. The garden gives the school an on-site, outdoor classroom, and it provides the public an up-close look at a model of how to help reduce runoff and pollution downstream into the Waccamaw River watershed and, ultimately, the Atlantic Ocean.

Fuss said a garden planted last year at Socastee High School was the pilot program for the area, and more Horry County schools are on the

agenda this fall.

The Horry County Stormwater Department, with \$8,000 donated by two area Wal-Mart Supercenters, also sent officials to assist in the garden installation.

Jackie Taylor of the Stormwater Department had her own kid crew around her at work easing shrubs and flowers into the soil.

"You don't have to excavate very deep," she said, showing how 8 to 12 inches overall sufficed for this garden, completed in less than two hours.

She said if more rainfall can stay concentrated in such a garden, it filters out heavy metals and other chemical elements from flowing onto roads and other passages.

Angie Smith, who teaches language arts at the school, said the garden brings reading, math, earth science and social studies about environmental awareness into one place.

"You have all of your materials," she said, pointing to the garden as children raced back and forth to get refills with tarps of mulch from a mound to various parts of the garden.

### More info

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Contact STEVE PALISIN at 444-1764.

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