

Red Oak Rain Garden (RORG)

July 13, 2019 Status Report

by Eliana Brown, Illinois Extension



TIMELINE

Phase I (demo/construction) is set to begin the week of July 18. It is possible it will be delayed a week for monitoring equipment to be delivered. Phase I includes (but isn't limited to):

Sidewalk closure.

Rock removal and reshaping the garden profile. Associated erosion control.

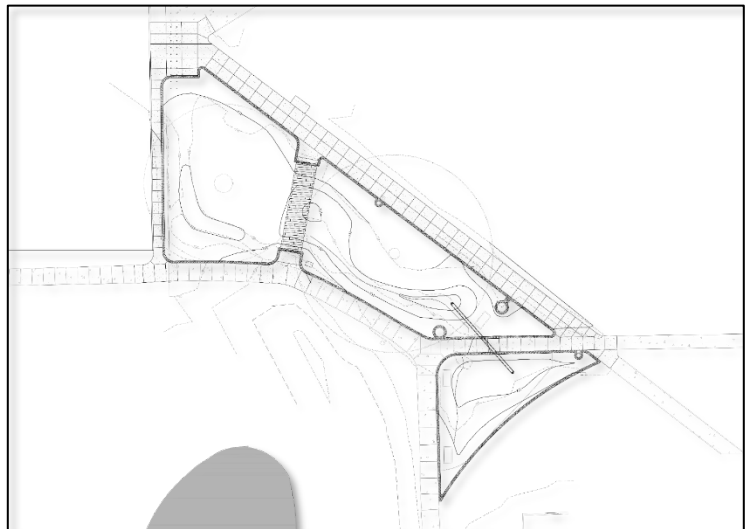
Concrete work: Demolition and replacement of some areas of sidewalk. Footings for boardwalk.

Monitoring equipment installation.

Soil amendments followed by a layer of mulch.

Phase II (plant installation) is scheduled for mid/late September (weather dependent). A volunteer orientation session for Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists needs to be scheduled for early September.

Phase III (boardwalk and sign) is scheduled for early spring. Allerton Park is partnering with RORG to donate culled Osage orange trees to build a boardwalk similar to theirs near the mansion. Culling happens over the winter. As mentioned, footings will be installed summer 2019. Wooden portions will be constructed early spring. The garden sign will be installed at the same time.



PROJECT FINAL DESIGN

During the summer 2016, two campus/community stakeholder meetings were held and the following garden aspects were seen as important: identity (signs), paths (through the garden), art (include more), interactivity, research, public education, and a design that is “nature interpreted”. These aspects are addressed below:

Identity. The campus Architectural Review Committee (ARC) has approved a sign similar to the ones at the arboretum and Japan House. It will be located at the south approach to the boardwalk.

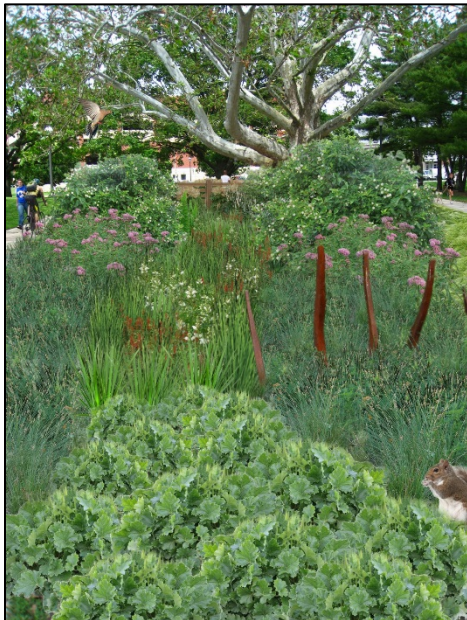
Paths. An Osage orange boardwalk will traverse the garden.

Art. Artwork depicting the garden flowers and the animals they support has been created and applied to notecards. Sales of the notecards help support the garden.



Interactivity. Program staff from nearby residence halls (Allen and LAR) are partnering with RORG team to host activities with students to support the garden. An example activity is an event to paint plant markers. RORG social media accounts are all under the handle: @RainGardenUIUC. An existing MOU between Extension and Facilities & Services continues to allow Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists to participate in work days for the garden.

Research. RORG is partnering with Civil and Environmental Engineering to monitor inundation levels. The garden will be part of a data dashboard that provides researchers and students access to this information.



Public Education. A series of Extension instructional brochures are being created. These will be similar to these:

<https://iiseagrant.org/resources/publications-products/>

Nature interpreted: The garden plants are all native plants or nativars. The design is based on layers as described in “Planting in a Post-Wild World”

<https://www.thomasrainer.com/book/>. It establishes the ground cover and structural layers first. A limited number of seasonal plants will be installed with them. More will be added in subsequent years as volunteers decide.