

News & Views



Welcome to 2021

Like the rest of the world, the volunteers at West Central Park Project were happy to see 2020 in our rear-view mirrors. While we continue to hope for our community's safety and happiness, we can only dream about a return to the good old days of concerts and other events at the park.

But we *are* moving forward, and continue to make plans we can implement in the early part of the year while the weather is predictably cold and wet, with the goal of making the park an even better place to safely walk, talk, play, eat, and learn. See [Around the Park](#) for an update.

We're also working on a series of articles about things that we are doing here that might be useful in your own outdoor spaces as well. In this issue Master Gardener and founding WCPP board member Dave Humphreys writes about our Rain Garden. We'll be covering moles, pruning, and other topics in upcoming newsletters. And music!

Don't forget, even on the wettest days there's a lot to see at WCP, so we hope you'll drop by and take a look at what's going on as our new open air canopy takes shape, and other winter activities continue.



Around the Park

The big news this month is that construction will be starting on a new open-air canopy on the east side of the gravel event area. The project is a collaboration with our neighbor, The Park Side Café, and should be completed by sometime next month. In keeping with our mission to maintain a walkable neighborhood and a resilient, connected community, we believe the new canopy will beautify our space and support some ideas we have in mind for next year.



In This Issue:

- Welcome to 2021
- Around the Park
- Feature Article: Rain Gardens
- Urban Green Commons & Healthy Communities
- How It Works: Park Finances
- Volunteer Magic
- Giving Tree

Rain Gardens: Beautiful and Functional

by Dave Humphreys, Master Gardener



West Central Parks' rain garden helped redirect and purify standing water that pooled after persistent rains.

Photos Courtesy of Laurie Shacklett

We're well into the wet months, and some sources indicate that due to climate change, heavy rains may become more commonplace than our traditional Western Washington drizzle. When we first started to landscape West Central Park in 2013, there was a great deal of standing water on the northern end of the site after persistent rain. We decided that a rain garden would provide an ideal solution to this problem. But a rain garden is far more than a retention pond. In this issue, we'll be taking a brief look at some of the benefits of rain gardens and the resources available to help you build one on your own property.

Runoff from hard surfaces such as roads, driveways, and rooftops contains pollutants, and much of the pollution in our waterways comes from stormwater flowing out of developed areas. Rain gardens not only collect this stormwater runoff but also absorb, filter, and treat it before the pollutants can reach groundwater - and eventually streams, wetlands, and marine waters.

Also unlike a simple retention pond, rain gardens are aesthetically pleasing, and as they aren't designed to hold water for extended periods, they don't attract pests such as mosquitoes; instead, they attract a variety of birds and beneficial insects.

With the right information, planning, and materials - plus a little math and some elbow grease - you can build a rain garden of any size to fit your yard. We highly recommend Washington State University's *Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington** which is specific to our region and will provide you with all you need to know to

create your rain garden. In addition, while the materials for rain gardens aren't by any means free, the City of Olympia's Storm and Surface Water Utility offers homeowners a reimbursement of up to \$400 to cover your costs (application forms can be found online at olympiawa.gov) - all the more reason to consider dealing with your storm-water runoff, helping to clean up our waterways, and making your yard more beautiful at the same time

If you'd like to see how a mature rain garden works or find out about other water management techniques, visit us at West Central Park on any Sunday from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm (starting at 10:00 in spring and summer.) We'll be happy to show you around and answer your questions!



*find the rain garden handbook free online at www.12000raingardens.org/resources/

What are the health benefits of green spaces in cities?



Feeling stressed? Research suggests you should to head to your local park as the surrounding greenery may help you relax.

Matilda van den Bosch, an assistant professor at UBC's School of Population and Public Health and Department of Forest and Conservation Sciences, co-authored a recent World Health Organization (WHO) report summarizing the health benefits of urban green spaces. The report recommends people have small green spaces very close to where they live, as well as larger areas with room for sports fields.

What are the health benefits of green spaces in cities? Recent studies have shown multiple positive health effects from urban green spaces, including improved mood, stress relief and promotion of physical activity. Some studies have also used brain imaging techniques to confirm that symptoms of depression are reduced by

nature. In addition, people tend to interact more easily in green spaces, building a sense of community.

By reducing stress, increasing physical activity, and stimulating social cohesion, we can prevent many chronic disorders. People living in green areas have lower risk for several diseases, such as depression, cardiovascular diseases, and asthma.

Evidence points towards the need for both small green spaces very close to where people live and spend their days as well as large green spaces. The smaller areas offer a space for everyday encounters and provide visual stimulus of nature. Larger spaces offer formal provisions such as playing fields and opportunities to explore and be physically active.

University of British Columbia
Faculty of Medicine School of Public Health
www.spph.ubc.ca/parks-big-and-small-needed-for-public-health/
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Excerpted by permission



Volunteers make magic happen at the park

From one season to another the gardens, raised beds, and other areas at the park seem to magically get weeded and planted and maintained. It's not Park Elves (that *would* be magical) but folks from our local community who want to help co-create a useful, vibrant space for everyone to enjoy. And it turns out that the process itself, working with friends and neighbors, is truly enjoyable as well.

Why not join us? We currently have openings for an additional board member, volunteer coordinator, and someone to help with outreach and program/activities. Except for gardening and landscaping tasks, most of the work is done virtually right now, making it accessible to everyone. We can also provide supervision reporting for students and others who might need official volunteer hours. Shoot us an email or give us a call for more information.

How It Works: Park Finances

Money. We all need it, but in the world of nonprofit organizations we generally don't talk about it too much except when we're asking for donations. For the past couple of months many of you have likely been deluged with emails requesting your support from a slew of worthy organizations, so it seemed like a good time to explain where support for West Central Park Project comes from, and why we need it.

The WCPP is a 501(c)3 Washington nonprofit corporation, chartered in 2013. We are governed by a board of trustees, must file annual financial reports to the state and to the IRS, and do not have to pay taxes on any donations we receive. However, we DO have to pay property taxes (which are substantial) and sales taxes on things we purchase. We currently do not have any paid staff, so we have no payroll. Besides property taxes, our main expenses are for monthly utilities (water/garbage and power for lighting), insurance, and the cost of running our summer concerts. Most of the supplies and equipment



we use to maintain the park are donated by volunteers and other park supporters.

Our funding comes mainly from donations by individuals, some of whom have supported the park right from the beginning. We also apply for grants, and continue to work on new sponsorship possibilities with local businesses and organizations. All of these help us keep things safe and blooming in the park, and be prepared to strike up the music when concerts can begin again.



Surviving & Thriving: Year End Fundraiser

Many organizations, especially those whose missions include public performances and public spaces, struggled in 2020 as the pandemic made concerts and events impossible. WCPP was no exception. The donations and sponsorships received during our free summer concerts have always been a big part of our income and were vital to keep things going. In 2020 we reached out to our community with a year end fundraiser to request support, Thanks to all those who stepped up to help us keep the park open, and safe. We literally could not make it without you.

Thanks to WCPP 2020 Donors

Amy Sewell - Betty Bailey - Rayne Pearson - Rob Healy - Valiree Hall -
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