

Publication: The Star Press

Publication date: Sunday, August 16, 2009

City hall switches to dry landscape

Written by SETH SLABAUGH

MUNCIE -- The landscaping at city hall is being torn out and replaced with "Xeriscape," a term coined by the Denver Water Department in 1981 meaning dry landscape. "Xeros" is a Greek word meaning "dry."

"We need to practice what we preach -- water-wise landscaping," said Shareen Wagley, coordinator of the Muncie-Delaware County Department of Stormwater Management.

The storm water department is paying for the \$30,000 project. The department, a collaborative effort between the Muncie Sanitary District, Delaware County, the town of Yorktown and Ivy Tech Community College, is funded by a storm water service charge on homes, businesses, churches and other property.

Xeriscape landscaping is also known as "water-wise," "water-smart," "low-water" and "natural landscaping.

It requires drought-tolerant, native plants that have adapted to Indiana's hot, cold, wet and dry weather; reduction of lawn areas, because lawns require more water; adding organic matter and mulch to help make more water available to plants and to retain soil moisture; and other steps.

Native plants drastically reduce the need for irrigation, fertilizer and pesticides, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Less irrigation results in less runoff, while less chemical applications keep runoff clean.

The local storm water office was created to reduce the amount of polluted runoff entering the White River and its tributaries.

Perfection Lawn Care says several thousand plants -- almost all native -- will be installed at city hall later this month, including maple and redbud trees, coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, daylilies, and prairie grasses like little bluestem and prairie dropseed.

Not all existing trees were removed from city hall, only those that were damaged or dying.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, 7.8 billion gallons of the water consumed daily in the United States is devoted to outdoor use -- the majority of it for landscaping.