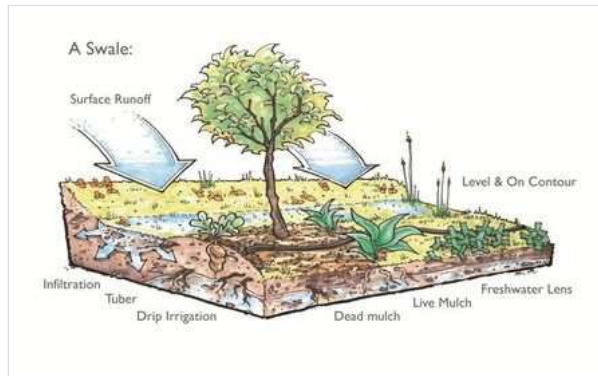


selecting plants that will suite your specific rain garden/bioswale needs. Regardless, a rain garden/bioswale is a relatively low cost investment and, with the selection of proper plants, should be relatively maintenance free.

Rain gardens/bioswales can also be used to teach about natural systems and the impact of urban activities on our natural world. Any community or school group can assist with the design, monitoring, and maintaining of a rain garden/bioswale to ensure it meets its intended use. These include picking a location and suitable plants, monitoring water and soil quality both before and after setup, monitoring plant growth, and examining the occurrence of wildlife. Students, particularly, can use a rain garden/bioswale to learn about specific environmental processes, such as water and nutrient cycles, and the importance of plants in bioremediation (i.e., the removal of contaminants from water and soil).



How a Swale Works - Click Image to Visit the Water Conservation Open Source Hub with Videos. Photo by unknown author is licensed under CC-BY-3.0

Located between the new Africatown Heritage House & the Hope Community Center, a bioswale was designed to handle stormwater runoff from the Heritage House roof and parking lot (see pre and post planting pictures below). The roof and parking lot was designed to deal with heavy rainfall, but didn't address issues with any pollutants that might be in the stormwater (i.e. water quality). The addition of the bioswale, supported by District One Mobile County Commissioner Merceria Ludgood, with its numerous plants and trees, will help not only to create a stunning habitat for a variety of organisms, but a number of the plants will also store or even neutralize heavy metals and other automotive contaminants, including oil, antifreeze, brake fluids, etc., that are likely in the stormwater. Located with a two minute walk, the new Africatown Rain Garden is the perfect outdoor science lab for students at Mobile County Training School. As an extension of the current environmental education project, STEMMING the TIDE: Empowering Youth to meet Coastal Environmental Challenges, students will help maintain and monitor the environmental impact of the bioswale and will be exposed to topics such as water conservation, pollution, and environmental resilience.



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