

# Friends and Neighbors Day to feature rain garden talk, tours and presentations

By KAREN HERZOG Bismarck Tribune | Posted: Thursday, June 10, 2010 2:00 am |



The USDA rain garden in 2009.

A rain garden at the Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory just south of Mandan will be a featured topic at the lab's annual Friends and Neighbors Day on July 22.

Last year's Friends and Neighbors Day drew more than 800 people, according to Technical Information Specialist Cal Thorson.

The local rain garden is among "People's Gardens" established in all 50 states, according to a statement from Tom Vilsack, U.S. agriculture secretary.

Vilsack said that more than 400 People's Gardens have been started in the past year as part of an initiative challenging USDA employees to create gardens at the offices or in their communities.

Last year, 34,000 pounds of produce went to local charities from 124 such gardens.

People's Gardens are meant to connect access to nutritious food to protecting the landscape, serving communities and helping those in need, as well as educating children and adults about agriculture and fresh foods.

The local rain garden uses native plants, which are tolerant of local climate, soil and water conditions, to take up excess water, filtering it through the soil before it enters the groundwater system. Rain garden plants also return water vapor to the atmosphere, channels and diverts rain and makes the most of the natural moisture that falls in the form of rain or snow.

Presentations and tours will be offered during Friends and Neighbors Day on July 22 starting at 2 p.m. There is no cost to attend, and a free evening barbecue will be served. Dinner music will be provided by Tom O'Neal.

Presentations from 2 to 6 p.m. include medicinal plants, birding in North Dakota, obesity, "Stump the Tree Man," soil organisms, community gardening and local food initiatives.

Tours start at 3 p.m. and include bioenergy cropping systems, cover crops, cattle and beef production with expensive oil, gas and diesel fuel, integrated cropping systems, CCA continuing education, children's activities, horse-drawn wagon rides, exhibits and a historical station tour.

For more information, call 667-3001 or visit [www.mandan.ars.usda.gov](http://www.mandan.ars.usda.gov).

The NGP research laboratory is on Highway 6 just south of Mandan.

Locations of nationwide People's Gardens can be viewed at [www.pubinfo.usda.gov/garden](http://www.pubinfo.usda.gov/garden).

Information about each garden can be viewed by clicking on the map markers.

— *Karen Herzog*