




Corporate Volunteers Come to the Aid of Back Cove Gardens

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry sent this bulletin at 09/15/2014 03:27 PM EDT

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For Immediate Release

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September 15, 2014

PORTLAND—IDEXX Laboratories, the Westbrook biomedical company, has been sending teams of volunteers to provide much-needed help with the maintenance of Portland's YardScaping Gardens at Back Cove. After more than ten years of planning and development on the part of the Maine YardScaping Partnership, the gardens opened to the public in 2011.

The two-and-a-half-acre demonstration garden, situated along Portland's Back Cove Trail, is a large project designed to be a showcase for trees, shrubs, and perennials that help gardeners and landscapers reduce their reliance on fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation water.

"As any gardener knows, even with perfect planning and planting, the work of maintaining a garden never ends," said YardScaping Partnership coordinator Gary Fish. "So, after more than a decade of work creating the gardens, it was quickly realized that installation was the easy part, and we had to quickly come up with a regular schedule for maintenance."

Maintenance? Read: weeds. Lots of them, in never-ending variation and abundance. But these are sustainable gardens—little or no weed killers used here. And that takes lots of lots of unrelenting weed-pulling, cardboarding, and mulching, that is to say, human power. But, with very limited funding, how can this be accomplished?

Enter many volunteers from the local community, including Master Gardeners, businesses, and local residents. And now. . .the corporate world.

At the beginning of this summer, IDEXX Laboratories began sending regular groups of volunteers—on company time—to help with the weeding. Their interest began with this question: "Is there an upper limit on the amount of help you would need? There is so much interest in this volunteer opportunity. . .

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“It’s this kind of enthusiasm and support that will help sustain these gardens and keep them beautiful, for all to enjoy, well into the future,” said Fish.

For more on the YardScaping Gardens at Back Cove and YardScaping, go to <http://www.yardscaping.org>.

The Maine YardScaping Partnership was formed out of a rising concern about yard care products washing into nearby waters, as well as the risks of pesticide exposure to people, pets, and wildlife. The Partnership includes more than 30 businesses, organizations and agencies from around the state. Most of the work on the gardens has been done by volunteers from those organizations and from many of the neighborhoods that surround the cove.

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Photo 1: IDEXX volunteers at work, mulching a garden bed at the YardScaping Gardens at Back Cove. The three-step weeding/mulching process involves the complete weeding of the bed, the laying down of heavy cardboard to cover the entire area, and then the application of the final layer of mulch.



Photo 2: One of the garden beds at the YardScaping Gardens at Back Cove, after weeding and mulching are complete. Note that all of the path edges are also mulched.



Photo 3: The IDEXX crew takes a quick break from their mulching work at the YardScaping Gardens at Back Cove.