

The Faces of Urban Forestry



Adam McAlpine
Stormwater Engineer



Stormwater Retention Basin was Enhanced with Trees

Adam McAlpine's role in the Valparaiso's Engineering Department includes drainage projects and stormwater management. As a civil engineer, he is used to "thinking very functionally and solving problems without thinking about using trees."

That all changed when Adam began retrofitting a 3-acre, dry bottom drainage basin that had been designed to catch peak flow stormwater runoff from a surrounding development. His goal was to naturalize the site to reduce mowing and make it more aesthetically appealing.

Adam started listening to advisors and paying attention to what other communities were doing. The result was a natural reshaping of the land, restoring streams to natural courses, and the construction of two ponds. But one thing was missing -- trees.

Adam called Public Works employee Ann Brugos who he knew had received U.S. Forest Service funds through the Indiana Division of Forestry to plant trees for environmental benefits. He said to her, "If you have a couple of trees to plant here, please let me know." Instead of two trees, Adam got 40 for his project. This enabled him to plant 11 different species in the basin, all native, all water tolerant, and all contributing to the primary goal of stormwater retention and filtration.

"The trees were really the icing on the cake for our project to make the basin more appealing both visually and functionally," said Adam. "There really is an extra element to the project because of the trees... and I was glad they were available."

“Trees weren't part of what we were originally thinking, but they added to the project.”

— Adam McAlpine



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A joint project of U.S. Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry, the National Association of State Foresters, and the Arbor Day Foundation. For more information visit arborday.org/faces