

Color comes to FH rain barrel project

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It might be called green infrastructure, but community activists in Fairport Harbor plan to fuse more than one color to an upcoming stormwater project that's been gaining popularity around Northeast Ohio in recent years.

Discover Fairport Harbor, a community group organized last year, is partnering with the Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District to host the workshop at 7 p.m. March 13. The workshop is expected to be hosted at the former Thall's Shore Store, 614 High St., but organizers warn it may have to be moved to another nearby location.

The district has been instructing rain barrel workshops for four years, but this is the first time it has been a part of a rain barrel workshop where the barrels will be painted, said Natalie Gertz-Young, an education coordinator for the district.

The idea originated from the Painted Rain Barrel Project, started in 2011 by Collinwood artist Linda Zoltan Wood, said Anna Coll, a Discover Fairport Harbor member and organizer of the event.

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Barrel

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Twelve of the project's painted rain barrels are featured in an exhibit this month at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Wood has agreed to advise Coll and provide materials on her rain barrel project, and she said she hopes to visit Fairport Harbor when the project is nearly finished.

Coll has been rallying residents on Facebook and at village meetings to participate in the project. She said she hopes the barrels she and other volunteers paint can turn out like the

labyrinth canvasses Collinwood artists have made over the years.

"What we're really hoping is not only providing rain barrels and getting a trend going in this town to help ease our sewer systems during heavy rains but also to add a definitive element and something interesting for folks when they drive into town," Coll told village officials and audience members at March 4's Fairport Harbor Village Council meeting.

The function of rain barrels is to catch stormwater run-off from roofs, reducing the amount of fertilizer and waste products getting washed up and reduce the

risk of stormwater infiltrating sewer pipes, Gertz-Young said.

"When we can reduce stormwater, we can reduce the pollutants that run into our streams, rivers and eventually Lake Erie," Gertz-Young said.

Each blue-colored barrel can hold up to 55 gallons of water. That water can then be stored and used for other purposes.

One use Gertz-Young suggested is irrigating a community garden. Discover Fairport Harbor is raising money to start.

The kits to build a rain barrel cost \$59 and participants must be registered ahead of time by calling the

conservation district at 440-350-2730.

Ten barrels have been donated to the project and will be worked on by Fairport Harbor High School students, Coll said.

After being assembled, each barrel in the project will need to be sanded, primed, painted and top coated.

Coll said she expects to schedule a series of "painting parties" over the next six or eight weeks before they're ready to be placed. Right now the group is considering rain barrel locations at the proposed community garden, the Fairport Harbor Senior Center and the schools.