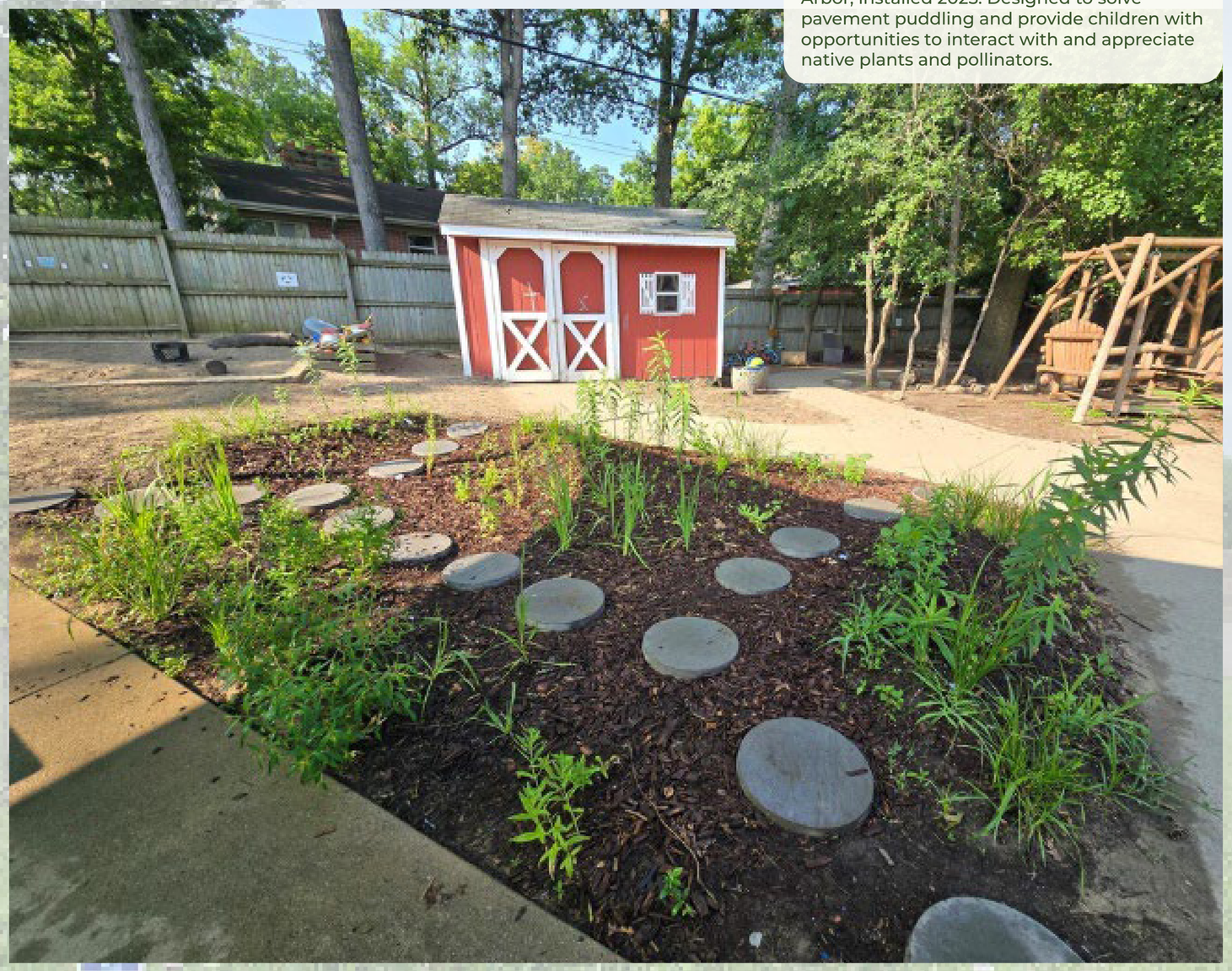
PUBLIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGN, MAINTENANCE AND EDUCATION *Washtenaw County, MI*

Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner's Office – Rachel Leonard

As Green Infrastructure Specialist, Rachel Leonard designs, monitors, and maintains public green stormwater assets. Public perception and maintenance of these assets are critical to their long-term success. Leonard designs with native plants to maximize the ecosystem services of Green Infrastructure, and many of these species are outside of typical ornamental gardening vernacular. She uses the principles of landscape care that she learned at SNRE/SEAS to ensure that investments in GI pay hydrological, ecological, and social dividends for many years, and to subtly expand public perceptions of what a garden can look like.

Neat edges, massing, educational signage, ornaments, flowering plants throughout the growing season, and seating are some of the elements used to communicate care and stewardship of a site. Beyond initial design and installation, their office regularly monitors sites to maintain these cues over the long term – replanting and editing as needed to adapt to everchanging conditions. Public outreach is another critical element of Leonard's work. Their cadre of volunteer stewards help to advocate for the care of these spaces, and public volunteer workdays and educational events expand the reach of their principles of environmentally responsible stormwater management and stewardship to more corners of the Washtenaw County community every year.



Rain garden at Gretchen's House, Ann Arbor, installed 2025. Designed to solve pavement puddling and provide children with opportunities to interact with and appreciate native plants and pollinators.



Rain garden at Sugarbrook Park, Ypsilanti, 2024. Installed in a regularly flooded and soggy area in a low SES neighborhood. Designed for ease of maintenance, coherence, and blooms throughout the season.



Neighborhood rain garden education, Ypsilanti. Leonard uses her front yard to start conversations with neighbors and set an example for ecological stewardship in a residential setting.

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Design With Care: Joan Nassauer and the Importance of Ecological Design, Aesthetics and Management

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