

Detroit SWST Graduates form Rain Roots

By Erin Johnson

Since 2019, the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter and Friends of the Rouge have brought free stormwater maintenance education to Detroit through the Storm Water Specialist Training Program. SWST gives community members the hands-on training to provide needed stormwater maintenance to combat residential flooding and further contamination of the Great Lakes. SWST teaches participants how to identify, weed, and properly care for all sizes of rain gardens, the equipment necessities for effective, safe work, techniques to manage a stormwater business and the knowledge and tools needed to properly assess and manage rain gardens such as soil health, rainwater catchment, garden design and more. SWST participants receive a strong overview of urban green stormwater infrastructure, native plant care, and the tools needed to contribute to Detroit's budding green workforce.

SWST continues to get bigger and better every year, expanding in 2024 to three cohorts and adding an hour of workforce development training to two hours of outdoor instruction. The SWST grad network includes more than 85 metro Detroiters and a group of SWST grads are in the process of developing a stormwater maintenance cooperative!

Following the SWST education of cooperative business models, Rain Roots Cooperative will provide more work opportunities to its members and the ability to compete for larger rain garden maintenance contracts as a team. Cooperatives are people-centered enterprises owned, controlled and run by, and for, their members to do collective work for collective benefit. Rain Roots is currently in the process of choosing a cooperative business structure, drafting bylaws and developing guidelines for operation!

SWST is a dynamic program that provides a wealth of opportunity to engage in taking great care of our communities and our Great Lakes! Please email Erin Johnson, Community Organizer at erinp.johnson@sierraclub.org for information on this year's SWST program, or about the Rain Roots Cooperative.

Join the Stormwater Specialist Training Program in 2025

SWST will again have three cohorts, Spring (April 15 - May 22), Early Summer (June 3 - July 17, no class July 4) and late Summer (July 22 - August 28), at Detroit's St. Suzanne's Cody Rouge Resource Center.

Register today at <https://bit.ly/SWST2025>



Sierra Club of MI Community Organizer Erin and her daughter Souluna, Diana Flynn SWST '23, Trista Hill SWST '23, Kunta Nelson SWST '24, Amethyst Crawford SWST '22, Charlene Peters SWST '24, Rachel Meeker SWST '24. Photo taken by SWST '24 grad and professional photographer Obi Adjuman, who is pictured at the very front of the picture.