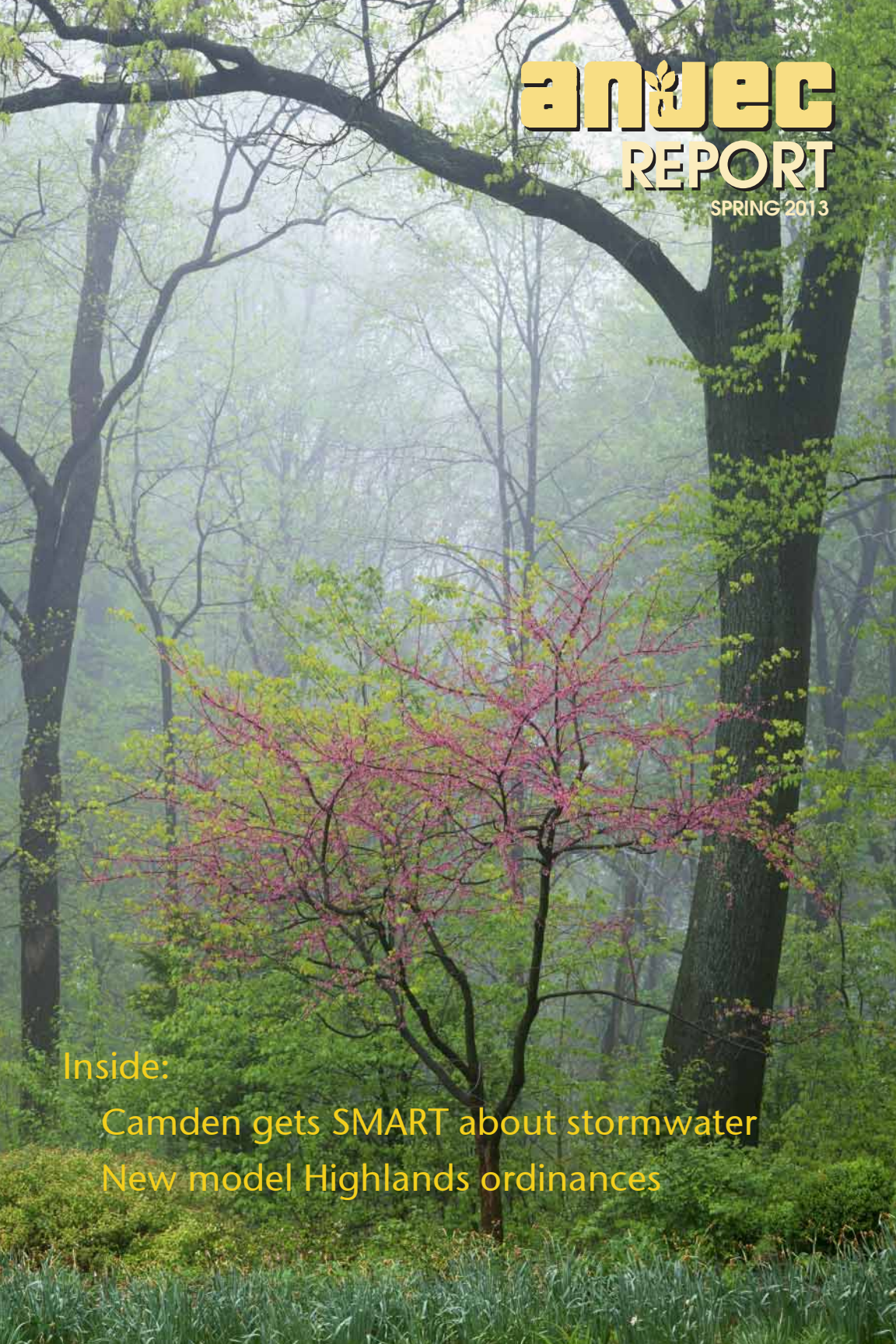

anjec REPORT

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Inside:

Camden gets SMART about stormwater

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By **Julie Lange Groth**, *ANJEC Report* Editor

Camden takes grassroots approach to stormwater management

As spring arrives in the City of Camden, bright patches of color are returning to the places where volunteers labored with shovels and rakes and lots of enthusiasm last summer, bringing new life into the City's built-out landscapes. The 19 rain gardens they have planted over the past two years are not only beautiful – they have an important job to do. They are part of the solution to manage stormwater and mitigate flooding in Camden.

As in some other New Jersey cities, Camden's water infrastructure is not only crumbling, but it has insufficient capacity to handle the volume of runoff produced by heavy rain events. That's when the system defaults to combined sewer overflow (CSO), allowing the wastewater and stormwater to share the same pipes feeding directly into the Delaware River. It's a messy business, not only polluting the river but also flooding many City streets and buildings.

Getting SMART about stormwater

Enter Camden SMART, short for Camden Stormwater Management Resource Training. It's an initiative to develop a comprehensive network of green infrastructure programs and projects for the City, beginning at the grass roots level. The collaboration is powered by a host of public and private partners that includes the City, Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority, the Cooper's Ferry Partnership, Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program, New Jersey Tree Foundation, New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection, and community organizations and residents.

Volunteers from Campbell's Soup planting a tree at the Brimm School Rain Garden.
Photo courtesy of Camden SMART

According to Cooper's Ferry Partnership Vice President Meishka Mitchell, it all began with neighborhood organizations and small nonprofits coming together to plan and begin making people aware of what was happening to cause the flooding and what could be done about it. But it was clear early on that the program needed to move out of the meeting rooms and into the streets to get people in the neighborhoods engaged in producing measurable results.

"We looked across the river at Philadelphia where they had launched massive green infrastructure projects to address the same issues, all driven by an EPA consent decree," Mitchell recalls. "But for us it was a community effort to proactively address

The Nature Conservancy's LEAF Interns and staff partner with the SMART Team to help with the weeding, planting, mulching, and watering of the Woodrow Wilson High School rain garden in Camden. **Photo courtesy of Camden SMART**

real world neighborhood issues of flooding and to restore and revitalize neighborhoods."

Harvesting the rain

In addition to installing rain gardens all over the City, SMART completed two major rainwater harvesting projects last year involving large cisterns that are being used to water community gardens, and there are plans to install more this year.

Last year local partners and volunteers, with help from the NJ Tree Foundation, planted 151 trees and 25 shrubs in five Camden neighborhoods. The plantings have not only beautified the landscape and enhanced the quality of life in those neighborhoods, but also removed approximately 2,500 square feet of impervious surface to improve infiltration of rain water. As the trees grow to maturity, they'll also provide welcome shade, improve air quality and offset greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

A rain barrel program is also on the drawing board for 2013 that will provide 100 residents with the materials and training to make rain barrels for their own use.

The Camden SMART initiative is already producing results. The green infrastructure installed so far will capture, treat and infiltrate about 1.5 million gallons of stormwater per year. "That's a drop in the bucket, but every gallon we keep out of the combined sewer is a gallon that isn't flooding our streets," says Mitchell.

In recognition of its impact, the program received a 2012 New Jersey Governor's Environmental Excellence Award.

"Camden is known for a lot of things, not all positive," Mitchell acknowledges. "But this program has really kicked off a new sustainability effort in Camden. The City today is becoming known as an example and is kind of leading the way for sustainability and green infrastructure in the State and it's really good to be at the forefront of that movement."

For more information about Camden SMART, visit the initiative's web site at *www.camdensmart.com*.

Fighting pests in an urban environment

In any home, keeping bed bugs, cockroaches and rodents at bay without harm to human inhabitants and pets can be tricky, but it's especially important in the multifamily housing found in more densely populated areas. A network of staff, pest management professionals and residents must cooperate in urban residential settings to successfully manage pests building-wide, according to the Northeastern IPM Center.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a coordinated approach that focuses on preventive measures – getting at the root of the problem before an infestation occurs, and working with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment.

The Northeastern IPM Center recently released a 51-page guide to help affordable housing managers, owners, and agents use IPM to contend with a variety of urban pests in their facilities. *Integrated Pest Management: A Guide for Affordable Housing* can be downloaded from the Stop Pests in Housing web site at *www.stoppests.org/what-is-ipm/guide/?thvqr.*