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The Power of Small Grants

In addition to the larger competitive grants that you read about in this newsletter, The Trust also makes smaller grants to projects where a little support goes a long way.

Putting Plants to Work

We know that plants are good for cleaning the air, but did you know they can do the same for our water?

A **\$10,000** grant will help **Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association**, a Bronx nonprofit housing group, build a rainwater collection system that will feed a garden in the backyard of one of the low-income apartment buildings that it manages. The project is a part of the mayor's plan to reduce stormwater runoff, which can overwhelm wastewater treatment plants, resulting in sewer overflows that are dumped into rivers. With financial and technical support from the City's Soil and Water Conservation District, Banana Kelly is currently designing a system on the apartment building's roof that will drain through a downspout into a vessel filled with native plants selected for their ability to draw impurities out of the water. "The water will provide a saturated condition for the wetland plantings," says Amanda Bayley, a designer with the project. "The water is then slowly released back to the sewer system through a low-flow drain line."



(Top) The back patio of this Bronx apartment building is being outfitted with a rainwater collection vessel that supports plant life similar to the system shown below.

A residents' committee has been formed and is providing feedback throughout the design phase and will also help build and maintain the system. "This is a small effort to address a big problem. If it succeeds in reducing stormwater runoff, the model can be used in other buildings," says Pat Swann, senior program officer for community development at The Trust.

As [They] Like It: Shakespeare for Teens

Shakespeare's timeless works shed light on the most sublime and ridiculous aspects of the human experience, but only if you can understand what they're saying. The bard's complex language can pose barriers to understanding, particularly for kids whose first language isn't English. But by teaching

through performance, the **Shakespeare Society** helps students understand the language and meaning of the plays. With a grant of **\$10,000**, the Society will take teaching artists into 30 City schools to work with 3,000 Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan middle- and high-school students. Teaching artists work with classroom teachers to develop a curriculum that meets the needs and interests of students, who are then encouraged to use their own experiences to find meaning in the plays. Students act out the text as it is read by their classmates and choreograph movements to illustrate themes such as jealousy and forgiveness. The Society has also developed ways to make speaking in iambic pentameter come more naturally, using memorization and word games that increase young people's fluency and comfort with the language.