



Trying To Live Greener

All around we hear people talking about living greener, but many are not sure what that means, let alone how to live that way. To be honest, most everyone is probably living somewhat Green right now.....even if it's just recycling your paper, plastic and bottles when you throw out your garbage. Or turning off your lights when you leave a room.

But how does living Greener translate into our landscapes? Some basics are: using less water on our lawns; applying less fertilizer to our lawns and gardens; using plant materials that are hardy to your specific climate; capturing rainwater runoff; using landscape products that are recycled. All of these are ways of living Greener in our landscapes.

So when you are designing a landscape project, stop and think how you could do it better, smarter, GREENER. You might need the assistance of a professional landscaper, if for no other reason than to give you ideas as to what products and solutions are in the marketplace for you to select from. Many Green solutions can easily be installed by the homeowner once they are aware of their existence.

In the urban areas one of the biggest problems when designing a landscape project is what to do with stormwater runoff. Many cities now require you to keep your stormwater runoff on site.....especially on commercial projects. By so doing we are reducing the pollutants running into the nearby streams, rivers and lakes.

RAIN GARDENS:

As a residential homeowner there are several ways you can reduce the amount of runoff from your property. One way to control your properties runoff is to create a rain garden. When designed properly, a rain garden will catch normal runoff, allowing it to percolate into the ground over a 24 hour period. Otherwise this water, with all it's pollutants, will end up in a storm sewer and eventually wash into the local stream, river or lake.

The rain garden can help in several ways. First, it allows for the pollutants to be filtered out through the garden soils before returning to the ground water. This happens as the water slowly percolates down through the soils. Many of the pollutants left in the soil are then absorbed by the roots of the garden plantings.

Secondly, these garden areas can slow the runoff long enough to allow for the silts and debris to settle out into the garden, before the water continues on as a "cleaner" runoff.

ABOVE OR UNDER GROUND STORAGE

Another means of reducing your stormwater runoff is by directing your downspouts into a collection basin of some sort. This could be as simple as a rain barrel or as large as an underground **cistern**. This captured rainwater can then be used to water your lawn, plants and garden beds. It's basically free water.

If you have a **water feature** of some sort, such as a bog, pond or pondless



waterfall system, you can even tie the captured water into this. It will keep it filled to the proper level and still allow you some extra water for watering plants. This underground storage does not have to take up any above ground "real-estate". That is to say it can be covered over with sod, a garden or even a patio (see Permeable Pavers information below) making it almost completely invisible - but very Green.

OTHER GREEN IDEAS

In keeping with the green philosophy, there are other ways in which you can become stewards of the land and waterways around your home.

There are some new products on the market that fall into the "Going Green" philosophy. One such product is VAST Pavers. These pavers are made from up to 95% recycled materials such as tires and plastic bottles. They currently come in six colors which can also be mixed to create a more blended look. These pavers can be used just like clay and concrete pavers, for patios, walkways and even driveways. At the present time they are available in a Holland style 3"x6" paver as well as a 4"x8". And better still, these pavers are manufactured right here in Minnesota, meaning less fuel used in shipping. If you would like some more information on these pavers, you may contact us or visit the VAST website and get all the latest product information on these "green" pavers. The website can be found at www.vastpavers.com.

If you are redoing a hard surface area such as a patio, walkway or driveway, consider installing **Permeable Pavers**. This type of installation allows you to catch your rainwater runoff and direct it into the groundwater, rather than off your property and into storm sewers. There are a variety of permeable paver options available, including the aforementioned Vast Pavers.

The principle behind the permeable paver is to collect and direct the stormwater runoff. The pavers are installed in a manner that allows the rain water to flow down between the pavers, rather than over and off the pavers. This water is then captured and stored in a basin directly below the pavers, or is directed into an underground culvert system which takes the water to a remote location on the property where it can slowly percolate into the ground. Either way, you are preventing this rainwater from running directly off your property and into the storm sewer, where it has very little chance of replenishing the groundwater.

If you are interested in landscaping greener or just have some questions about products in the marketplace, please feel free to contact us.

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