



ALTERNATIVE HOME AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN

For centuries, humans have developed roads and buildings without considering how they impact local rivers, lakes, and groundwater aquifers. Recently, there has been more interest in addressing these negative impacts. Even small and inexpensive changes can make a big difference.

There are many ways to make your yard more environmentally friendly. Reducing impermeable surfaces is one of the most effective ways of reducing non-point source pollution—runoff. Roofs, sidewalks, driveways, and other paved surfaces are all impermeable, which keeps rainwater from filtering into the ground. Instead, water rapidly flows into the storm drains, carrying harmful contaminants with it.



Homeowners can turn paved foot paths and driveways into dirt or gravel paths. If having a gravel driveway is not appealing to you, permeable pavement is a good option. Permeable pavement allows water to soak through into the ground making water available to recharge groundwater aquifers and reduce runoff into the storm drains. Slightly separating stones for foot paths can also allow water to seep into the ground more naturally.

You can create natural areas in your landscape that require little maintenance and also absorb more rain water than a lawn. Use low-maintenance ground cover plants, natural mulch materials, native plant materials, and other landscaping techniques. A natural area can also serve as a rain garden where there is a greater flow of rain water to be absorbed. If you live directly on a lake or creek, it is particularly important to leave a natural buffer between your lawn or landscaping and the water. The buffer will absorb some excess lawn chemicals which would otherwise harm the waterbody. For more information on rain gardens, see the Rain Garden Fact Sheet.



Another way to reduce storm runoff is by using rain barrels to collect rain that falls on your roof. Water collected here can be used to water your garden. This not only puts storm water to good use, but it keeps potential hazards out of lakes and rivers and also saves money on your water bill. Rain barrels can be purchased at any hardware store for between \$70 and \$200 depending on the size. They are also a manageable DIY project.

You can (and should!) reduce the harm you may cause rivers and lakes by reducing the amount of hazardous chemicals you use and cleaning up after your pet. Many harmful chemicals we use can be replaced with less harmful chemicals. That way, when a rainstorm sends water into the storm drains, there will be fewer harmful chemicals reaching the river. Similarly, it is important

to dispose of pet waste properly, since it carries harmful bacteria and other pathogens. For more information about properly disposing of pet waste, see the Water Friendly Pet Waste Fact Sheet.

For more information about alternative lawn and landscape design, see the following web sites:

Carolina Clear's Carolina Yards shows you how to create attractive and healthy yards by working with South Carolina's environment, rather than against it. Visit <https://www.clemson.edu/extension/carolinayards/index.html>

Clemson Cooperative Extension Service also provides information about creating an environmentally responsible landscape at <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/creating-an-environmentally-responsible-landscape/>

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