

RAINWATER: A RESOURCE FOR HOMEOWNERS

Runoff – A loss of good rainwater and a possible flood threat

Your home site is probably not the natural landscape it once was –most rainwater used to soak in, but now it is likely to run off your roof and driveway. Letting this rainwater run off your property is a waste of a good resource for gardening, watering lawns, or putting water back in the ground to “feed” your well. Not only is it a loss to you, but runoff from your land could damage your own driveway and landscaping or damage your neighbor’s property. If it isn’t soaked in or directed properly, your runoff can add to other stormwater and wash out area roads, bridges, and stream banks. Runoff from the neighbor could flood your basement or fill up the ditches and clog your culvert. Not only can stormwater do immediate damage, the polluted runoff degrades our lakes, rivers, wetlands, and other waterways.

So, why increase your water bill or run your water pump when you can catch that water and put it to good use? Why be a source of flooding in your neighborhood when you can help Mother Nature by slowing it down, spreading it out and soaking it in? Think of water as a resource – warm, un-chlorinated rainwater is great for plant irrigation, groundwater recharge, and other uses. Whether your landscape is large or small, there are many ways to catch, store and put rainwater to work.

How can homeowners capture rain water?

First look for places where water can’t soak into the ground. Pay attention to where it goes instead.

When one inch of rain falls on 1,000 square feet of pavement or roof, it results in 600 gallons of runoff. Think about the amount of water “going down the drain” every time it rains!

Start with a walk about your property. Besides the roof and driveway, identify the other sources of rainwater runoff. Below are some simple suggestions for catching or redirecting water to your benefit.



Image from www.ukrha.org



This rain barrel blends with the house.

- ❖ Where do your downspouts go? Down a pipe into the road ditch? **Disconnect your downspouts** and redirect them over “splash pads” to water areas such as lawns and gardens.
- ❖ Want to keep that downspout water for future uses? Disconnect the downspout at the proper height and feed the water into a **Rain Barrel**. Let’s say you have a 1000-square-foot roof. If you put a rain barrel (usually a 55 gallon container) at each corner of the house, you will get a full barrel of water from each downspout every time you get about a quarter inch of rain! That’s a lot of water from a typical rainstorm! Ask your county Soil and Water Conservation District about the availability of rain barrels.

- ❖ Do you have water running off your land creating wet spots or eroded gullies? Build a **Rain Garden** to catch that water before it reaches the bottom of the hill. Start with a good design – the Chemung County Stormwater Coalition website has the manual and advice you'll need. Dig the depression, build the berm, add the right soil, plant your plants and watch it fill when it rains – you have solved a problem and made a place of beauty besides.



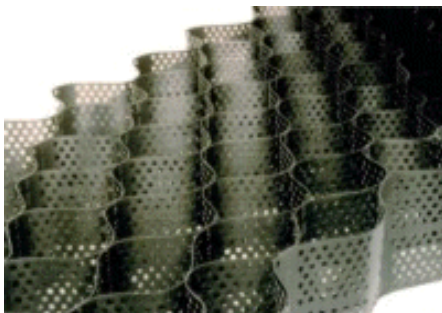
The rain garden is dug and bermed.



The planted rain garden catches runoff.

See the LID Sampler on Southern Tier Central's webpage for other designs for "living walls" and other low impact development practices that can give you a "greener" property while re-using rainwater.

What else should we look out for?



Geo-web holds gravel in place.

Stormwater runoff should not be directed to your **driveway**. Even a dirt and gravel drive doesn't allow much water to infiltrate. Over time, driveway soils will become a hard-packed surface. Consider using **pervious pavement** or "**geo-web**" or other "waffle" structures that hold gravel in place while letting water soak in. You'll have a sound driveway and put water back in the ground where it belongs.

During larger storms, runoff flowing over your lawn may go into your **road ditch**. Be certain the volume and velocity of the stormwater is at a rate the road ditch can handle. For questions about stormwater runoff going into your road ditch, contact your highway superintendent.

Thinking of adding a deck, garage, patio, addition, or some other construction that would add to your hard surfaces? This may increase the volume and velocity of stormwater runoff from your property. When you hire a contractor, be sure he or she is certified for this work – check out the "**Moving Dirt**" brochure for the Phase II Construction Permit requirements when an acre or more is disturbed.

The Rural Stormwater Coalition of Chemung, Schuyler & Steuben Counties can help:

Chemung County Stormwater Coalition
 Chemung County. Soil & Water Conservation District
 Schuyler County Soil & Water Conservation District
 Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District
 So. Tier Central Regional Planning

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www.chemungstormwater.org www.stcplanning.org www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8468.html

