Stormwater

What is Stormwater?

The EPA defines stormwater as runoff generated from rain and snowmelt events that flows over land or impervious surfaces, such as paved streets, parking lots, and building rooftops, and does not soak into the ground. While stormwater is prevalent in all environments, it is particularly an issue in urban or build up areas because of the ratio of impervious to pervious materials and the potential of existing infrastructure to carry unfiltered runoff directly to streams.

What is the big deal?

Unfiltered water from rain events can carry a myriad of **pollutants** picked up on the urban landscape and enter streams and lakes very quickly through the storm drain system. Stormwater carries with it pollutants such as; pesticides, herbicides, oils, road salt, sediment, and nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen. These pollutants have a negative impact on water quality and local wildlife. The excess water, which in a natural system would be infiltrating into the ground, changes the hydrology of streams and promotes **erosion**. Studies have shown that **small increases** in impervious surfaces (effects are seen around 7% impervious surface area) can drastically change the hydrology of streams and negatively impact water quality.

How can I help?

By implementing practices that promote the infiltration of stormwater you can contribute to the improvement of the water quality in nearby streams. While small-scale improvements on individual properties may not seem like they have any impact, collectively the addition of many small projects does have a positive benefit to your surrounding watershed. Rain gardens work to **slow, filter,** and **infiltrate** stormwater and are a great example of projects homeowners can add to their properties.