Local organizations and institutions have a special opportunity to reduce runoff from large impervious areas that produce large amounts of runoff. Parking areas for schools, churches and similar community centers are of special concern. Rain and snow melt from parking areas goes to storm drains that dump dirty, oily water into streams and ponds. In summer, runoff heated by dark pavement can hurt stream life that needs cooler water to thrive. Fish, frogs, turtles and aquatic insects slowly disappear in streams that get a lot of storm runoff. These streams also carry pollutants into local ponds, lakes and reservoirs.



Community organizations can keep streams healthy by putting runoff in the ground where it belongs. Low-cost rain gardens and groundcover plantings and soakage trenches can be weekend projects by volunteers. Community groups should also consider improvements like porous paving that can be installed by contractors. These efforts can draw positive publicity for the organization and inspire others to take action.

Project ideas for various local organizations are provided below.

Garden Clubs

- Sponsor a community workshop on how to create rain gardens (DVDs and videos are available)
- Organize a volunteer project to install a demonstration rain garden
- Promote organic lawn care and gardening (visit http://www.organiclandcare.net/store/books)

Schools



A rain garden is a great way for teachers and their students to learn about math and life sciences. The rain garden can cleanse runoff from parking areas and create a mini-ecosystem that attracts butterflies, birds and other intriguing wildlife. The rain garden can be planned as a special feature for a nature trail or an outdoor classroom where students can study the plants and wildlife for years to come.

Lake and Pond Associations

Storm runoff from homes and streets is likely to have a big impact the quality of your lake or pond. Nutrients in runoff feed weeds that can choke your lake and require costly herbicide treatments. Stormwater can also raise bacteria levels and water temperatures, which can cause more problems.

There are many simple, inexpensive ways a lake or pond association can lessen stormwater damages.

- Homeowner rain gardens to filter runoff from driveways & roofs
- Porous driveways, patios and walkways that let rain and snow melt soak into the ground
- Infiltration basins or soakage trenches for parking areas
- Grass swales between streets and shores
- Shrub or tree buffers along shorelines
- Organic lawn care and landscaping practices by watershed residents
- And much more (see http://www.nhlakes.org/HomeownersStormwaterGuide.pdf).



Churches

Your church can be environmentally friendly by building a rain garden or soakage swale or ground cover buffer to soak up runoff from the roof or parking lot. These economical practices can be part of a design that can offer beautiful spaces and benches for people to sit and enjoy your facility. A weekend project also offers an opportunity for church members to work together and delight in what they have built.

Libraries

People seek out libraries to gain knowledge that enables them to accomplish special interests. We can provide displays to help library patrons learn about ways to keep water clean. We also can supply DVDs of community workshops presented at many libraries.

Your library can install rain gardens, porous walkways and other improvements to cleanse runoff from your parking lot. The Friends of the Library should consider working with a garden club or youth group to design an attractive space to demonstrate runoff remedies, where patrons can sit, read and enjoy a pleasant outdoors area.

Youth Groups



