



The Campus as a Rain Garden - Campus Sustainability

RANDOLPH MACON WOMANS COLLEGE

VAN YAHRES ASSOCIATES E-NEWS

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Campus Sustainability

RAIN GARDENS, man-made water retention areas, and other supposedly sustainable site features are showing up with increasing frequency on campuses. But are they really sustainable? To be truly sustainable, a campus must rely on more than gimmickry or a series of isolated projects. Nature doesn't work that way, and your campus doesn't either. If you look at the whole campus as a rain garden, you'll come much closer to true sustainability.

In most of the eastern U.S., nature's self-sustaining ecosystem is the deciduous forest. The campus represents an intrusion into that system. How then can you make it sustainable? By dealing with four basic site components—soil, the plants and pavement on the surface, air and water—in a sustainable way.

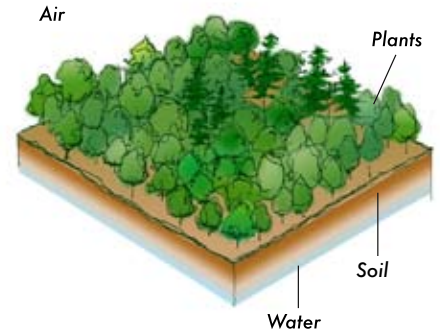
Start with mother earth—the soil. Soil is nature's sponge, designed to absorb, filter and distribute water. The forest naturally protects and nourishes the soil so that it can perform those tasks. The campus must do exactly the same thing.

How do you do this? First, plan your campus carefully and respect natural processes. Then, preserve the natural topsoil. During new construction, harvest the topsoil. Don't bury it. Enrich the soil's microorganisms with compost, well-rotted mulch and organic fertilizer. And when the soil becomes compacted from too much use, provide oxygen through aeration.

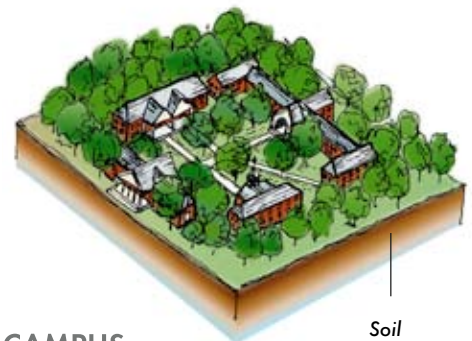
Whether developing a site project, locating a new building or preparing a master plan, we make these principles the cornerstone of our design process. And watch for our next three newsletters to learn more about the other elements of campus sustainability.

VAN YAHRES ASSOCIATES is one of the nation's leaders in master planning and site design for colleges, universities and other institutions.

To learn more about designing your campus and respecting natural processes, contact Mike Van Yahres at mvy@vanyahres.



DECIDUOUS FOREST



CAMPUS

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