

The Campus as a Rain Garden - Campus Sustainability

YELLOW BREECHES CREEK, MESSIAH COLLEGE

VAN YAHRES ASSOCIATES E-NEWS

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Campus Sustainability • Air and Water

Rain gardens 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 treat 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 addressing four basic site components – soil, plants, air and water - in a sustainable way.

In our last newsletters, we discussed the importance of protecting native soil and large shade trees. When we look at the other basic site component – air and water – we see that soil and trees are most important in protecting these resources. Trees help prevent runoff and clean the air. Native soil, nature's sponge, absorbs, filters and distributes water.

HOW DO YOU PROTECT AIR AND WATER ON YOUR CAMPUS?

First, wherever possible protect nature's water filtering systems – streams and vegetated swales. Build on the ridges or high ground. Use porous pavement and when necessary to detain runoff from parking lots or roofs, create detention areas that mimic nature's own systems by planting native vegetation – "what grows there, belongs there". Or design ornamental detention basins that seamlessly fit into the overall design of the campus

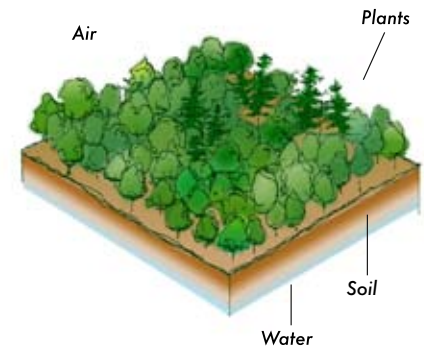
Whether developing a site project, locating a new building or preparing a master plan, we make these principles the cornerstone of our design process.

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

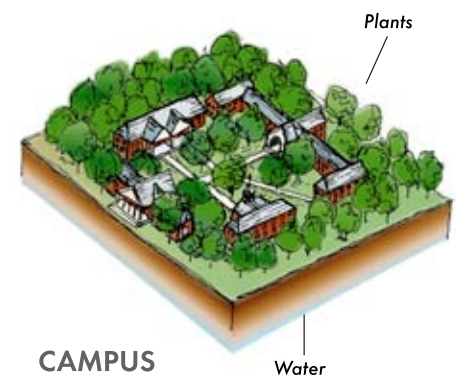
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To learn more about designing your campus or preserving your site, contact Mike Van Yahres at mvy@vanyahres.com or 434 295 4734.

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DECIDUOUS FOREST



CAMPUS

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