

In the Mainstream

Newsletter for Members of the Norwalk River Watershed Association [NRWA]
New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Wilton, CT, and Lewisboro, NY

www.norwalkriver.org

Spring/Summer 2008

CONSIDER THIS ATTRACTIVE LAWN ALTERNATIVE THAT WILL NOT REQUIRE POLLUTING CHEMICALS AND WILL NOT ENTICE BACTERIA-PRODUCING GEESE

MEADOWS AND WATER BY LARRY WEANER

Americans are using enormous quantities of water, fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, and fossil fuels to make lawns grow more vigorously, only to spend time and money cutting them short on a weekly basis. While mowed lawn will always have a useful place in the landscape, its overuse is exacerbating a number of environmental issues, particularly where water is concerned. These problems include pollution, overuse of water resources, streambank erosion, and flooding.

Wildflower meadows, if planned, installed, and managed properly, can help alleviate these problems while providing low-maintenance and colorful landscapes.

First, meadows can serve as a pollution buffer. They help to improve water quality by absorbing pollutants from herbicides, fertilizers, and other sources that are carried in water passing through the soil. The root systems of meadow plants are far more extensive than that of turf grass and, consequently, their ability to absorb pollutants is far greater.

Regarding water conservation, meadows contain extremely drought-tolerant plants that actually prefer not to be watered. This is in dramatic contrast to a lawn, which if not irrigated, browns at the first hint of heat and drought.

Flooding and streambank erosion have become serious problems in all of our communities. This is due not only to the severity of storms, but also to the increased amount of stormwater runoff that overloads our rivers and streams in developed areas. Meadows can also help in this regard by increasing the amount of rainwater that infiltrates the ground. As raindrops fall on a meadow, they slowly drip from leaf to leaf, landing gently as they reach the ground. They then enter the soil through a myriad of openings created by the deep roots of the meadow plants. This is in stark contrast to lawns, where short-cropped foliage and shallow root

systems encourage water to run off in a torrent to the nearest sewer or stream. The increased infiltration resulting from the meadow plants not only reduces flooding and streambank erosion, but also keeps our underground aquifers high during times of drought.

The current trend toward ecological concern, economy, and appreciation of the natural world has created a public eager for new ways to incorporate nature into their homes, businesses, and public lands. Native meadows can blend perfectly with these emerging attitudes. Water conservation and improved quality are but two of the important landscape enhancements that meadows can provide.

Larry Weaner is a principal of Larry Weaner Landscape Design Associates in Wilton. For more information on meadow design, visit www.lweanerdesign.com and www.ndal.org.

The wildflower-filled meadow pictured at right is a reminder to check the Schedule of Events for nearby September 9 and 17 meadow walks.



Model Ordinances. Rivers Alliance is collecting model ordinances and regulations on a variety of topics (e.g., impervious surfaces) to help manage nonpoint source pollution. Visit www.riversalliance.org to see this work in progress.

INVITATION TO THE PUBLIC

NRWA Annual Meeting

Program and Refreshments

“Controlling Stormwater: From Rain Gardens to Buffers”

Slide Lecture by Jane Didona, L.A.

Update: State of the Norwalk River System by Peter Fraboni

Thursday May 22, 7:30-9:00 PM

(optional tour of vest-pocket Gilbert-Miller Park NRWA helped to create across the road at 7 PM, weather permitting)

Georgetown Firehouse, 6 Portland Avenue/Route 107

Call 877-NRWA-INFO (679-2463 toll free) for information/directions to the

Didona, a Landscape Architect known for her utilization of different methods of increasing infiltration of stormwater to control runoff and erosion, will discuss different techniques (including pervious treatments, rain gardens, and buffers landscaped with native plants) applicable to settings ranging from a small yard and local business to an affordable housing project. Learn how to protect your property and our water supplies with a healthier and more beautiful environment. Peter Fraboni, Associate Director of Harbor Watch/River Watch, whose volunteers and scientists have been studying the water quality of the Norwalk and its tributaries for years, will give an annual update on the state of the river.

Members of NRWA and the public are encouraged to attend.

Georgetown Firehouse, on the north side of Route 107,
just east of routes 107 and 57 in Georgetown..

Parking is in the adjacent Post Office lot .5 mile east of Route 7 on Route 107.