

SWEET SOUNDS OF BETTY JONES
A FACEBOOK OVERSHARER

WATERED-DOWN LANDSCAPE
IS THERE A RETAIL REVIVAL?

wilton

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Getting
Down
& Dirty

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SAINT-ONGE**



created, and allowing plants to soak up all the water,” says Matthew Biron, landscape designer at Hoffman Landscapes in Wilton. To be effective, these attractive gardens should be planted with a base of hardy, deep-rooted native plants and grasses. Aquatic plants like pickerel, arrowhead, flag iris, lizard tail and cardinal plants have ‘wet feet’ that can absorb large amounts of water, and then go entirely without water for extended periods of time.

DRY CREEK BEDS

Dry creek beds are swales or low lying channels that work well if you are looking to slow down water flow on a sloping property, or channel water away from a particular spot. An area full of standing water is not only an eye sore; it can potentially harm your home’s foundation. “If you have a backyard that slopes down to a low line, you can divert the rainwater coming off of it from a lawn or patio into a dry creek bed at the bottom of your property,” explains Biron.

Municipal regulations regarding water overflow are stringent today, which means you cannot install a dry creek that exits onto your neigh-

Watered Down // BY SUSAN W. CAPPARELLE

LANDSCAPE SOLUTIONS FOR MANAGING RUNOFF

CONNECTICUT faces mounting drainage problems across the state. Water runoff carries away precious topsoil and pollutants to drains and rivers. Severe floods batter shoreline communities. Rising water table levels erode landscape and hardscape.

Urbanization brings with it ever increasing impervious surfaces like pavements and buildings where water can no longer percolate down to the aquifer. Wetlands, which traditionally play a vital role in controlling floods by absorbing water and reducing the speed at which flood waters

flow, are disappearing. Even our modern weather patterns are inundating us with excess rainfall, not to mention rising sea levels.

Luckily for homeowners there are a plethora of exciting, innovative landscaping solutions available to handle some of this increased runoff in their own backyards. And they are not large-scale or expensive options.

RAIN GARDENS

Rain gardens are a beautiful drainage option for flat yards and parking areas. They allow water to be captured from multiple points and diverted

to a single space—maybe a low spot in a yard that gathers all the runoff from a driveway.

“With a rain garden you’re capturing rainwater in a low-lying area that you’ve



WATER GARDENS

Well-designed and executed solutions for managing excess runoff can not only be attractive, but add value and protect from water damage.

bors' property. The best solution is to reroute the water into a dry well where it will percolate slowly into the ground. Dry creek beds can be a highly decorative drainage option, especially when filled with a mixture of colorful plantings, different sized boulders and smooth river rock.

**PERMEABLE OPTIONS:
PAVERS, STONES
AND MORE**

Permeable pavers and stones used for pool copings offer homeowners a variety of cost-effective and sustainable new styles, options and techniques to help decrease runoff by reducing hardcover surfaces.

"We recommend permeable pavers for patios and driveways because they promote effective water management – which decreases the potential for flooding and serious water damage and erosion to your property and landscaping," says Brian Cossari, landscape architect at Hoffman. Some pavers on the market are permeable, but in most cases, it is the gravel used in the joints between the stones that provide the necessary permeability. "The way we install the pavers allows the water to drain right through the joints," says Biron. "The thickness of the stones varies a lot and there are different products out there for patios versus driveways."

Using paving stones on hardscapes and landscapes offers both ecological and economical benefits: Improved water quality by reducing or eliminating storm water runoff, reduced downstream flooding erosion in streambeds and riverbanks, (while promoting rainwater infiltration and natural groundwater recharge) and, replacement of traditional retention and detention ponds.



Pay Someone Else

A professional gardener can come to your house, assess your needs, design a garden, install it, and even maintain it throughout the season. All you need to do is pick your fresh produce.

One such professional is John Carlson of Homefront Farmers. His Ridgefield-based company plans, designs, and installs a wide variety of organic, edible gardens at homes throughout Fairfield County. Each garden comes with an automatic drip irrigation system, and for about what it would cost you to have your lawn mowed each week, Homefront Farmers will maintain the garden for you. Prices vary, but start at only around \$300.

"Our typical clients are families who want to get their kids involved and want to feed them better food," explains Carlson, but said they've worked with anyone from empty-nesters to hobbyists who are looking for a little assistance in getting the most from their gardens. While 16'x20' gardens seem to be the most popular size for families, Homefront will install gardens of any size, even as small as 4'x4'. "The grocery store may only carry a couple kinds of carrots, but in your garden you can grow purple carrots, striped carrots, and more." But variety is only one of the many advantages of gardening. "Getting your kids to understand how food grows and where it comes from is such a benefit," says Carlson, "plus, there's such a primal satisfaction that comes from walking and working in the garden." —TRACY HOLLERAN