



HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT - WHAT IS GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE?

You've probably walked past Green Infrastructure and didn't even realize it! "Green infrastructure" is a term for nature inspired methods of managing stormwater. Things like rain barrels, rain gardens and bioswales are all considered green infrastructure, and they're found all over our beautiful county. Not only does green infrastructure manage stormwater, but it also provides other environmental benefits by reducing smog, improving air quality, and improving habitats for local critters!

What Does Green Infrastructure Do?

Green infrastructure reduces and treats stormwater at the source. When it rains, any water that hits the ground is called "stormwater" – stormwater runs across the roads, yards and urban areas (collecting pollutants as it goes) and travels into the storm drain system, a network of pipes that funnels extra water into nearby water bodies. Since stormwater isn't treated, all those pollutants picked up along the way travel into the local waters. That's where green infrastructure comes in! Nature-inspired management methods can reduce the amount of stormwater traveling into local water bodies and filter out some of pollutants traveling with it.

What Does Green Infrastructure Look Like?

Have you ever seen or heard of a rain garden? That's green infrastructure! Rain gardens are vegetated areas of grasses and other plants that collect and absorb stormwater runoff. Since excess water is absorbed into the ground of the rain garden, less polluted runoff is sent into our local waters. Other forms of green infrastructure you may have seen are things like rain barrels, which collect excess rainwater for later use, or bioswales, which transport stormwater from one area to another while filtering out pollutants. Some forms of Green Infrastructure blend right into the urban environment, like permeable pavements and green parking lots. Learn all about them at <https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/what-green-infrastructure#bioswales>.

How Does Green Infrastructure Impact Our Environment?

Since many forms of green infrastructure are nature-inspired, they have other environmental benefits besides stormwater management! Rain gardens and bioswales are vegetation based – they improve air quality by absorbing and filtering particulate matter that may be in the air. While rain gardens and bioswales often aren't very big, they can be home to a variety of insects, birds and small amphibians. Keep an eye out for a friendly frog the next time you see a rain garden!

Green infrastructure is everywhere, often hidden in plain sight. But it can only do so much when it comes to protecting our local water quality. You do your part to keep our creeks and Bays clean and free flowing by picking up litter and pet waste and using eco-friendly yard products. Learn more about stormwater, green infrastructure and reducing pollutants at www.ccleanwater.org.