Hi everyone,

Welcome to the Skagit Conservation District's Backyard Conservation class 2022.

Making the world a better place, one back yard at a time...

Sponsored by:

Skagit Conservation District in partnership with the City of Anacortes, City of Burlington, City of Mount Vernon, City of Sedro-Woolley, and Skagit County

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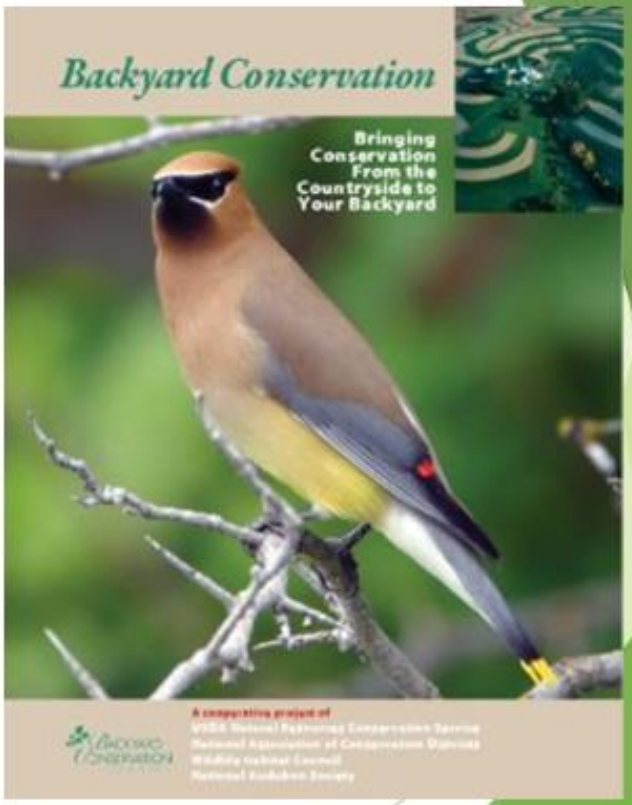


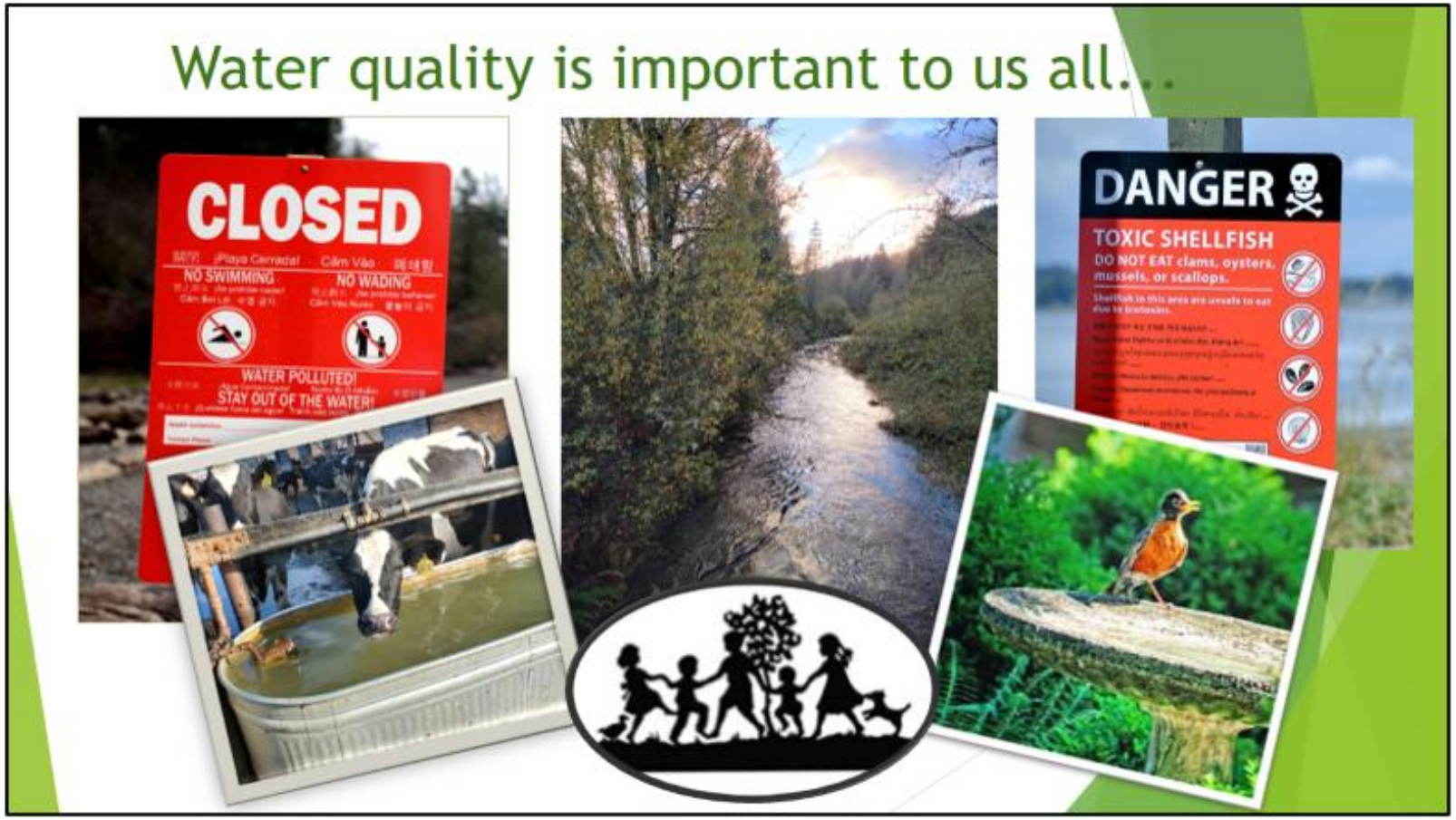
The Backyard Conservation Program was established in Skagit County on March 1, 2005.

It was the "Offspring" of USDA NRCS, NACD, & Wildlife Habitat Council's "Backyard Conservation" Program.

The Backyard Conservation Program was established in Skagit County on March 1, 2005. It is a national program developed by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in cooperation with the National Association of Conservation Districts and the Wildlife Habitat Council because of the need to comprehensively address issues effecting water quality.
Testing has shown that Urban and suburban runoff is a significant contributor of the pollutants that enter our waterways.

Understanding the problem is the first step to fixing the problem.

The guiding principle of this program is that we are all a part of the problem and therefore we are also all part of the solution.
We are the key to protecting our resources, our homes, our families, and our world, one backyard at a time…



Because water quality is important to all of us….

Program Goals and Objectives:

"To increase public awareness on a variety of backyard conservation practices and to promote community stewardship by exploring and investigating the fascinating natural world in our own backyards."

Our goal is to increase public awareness on a variety of backyard conservation practices and to promote community stewardship by exploring and investigating the amazing natural world in our own backyards.

Program Goals and Objectives:

We will be teaching practices that can be applied in everyone's backyards to help reduce stormwater pollution, provide habitat for wildlife, and create a healthy and more sustainable environment.

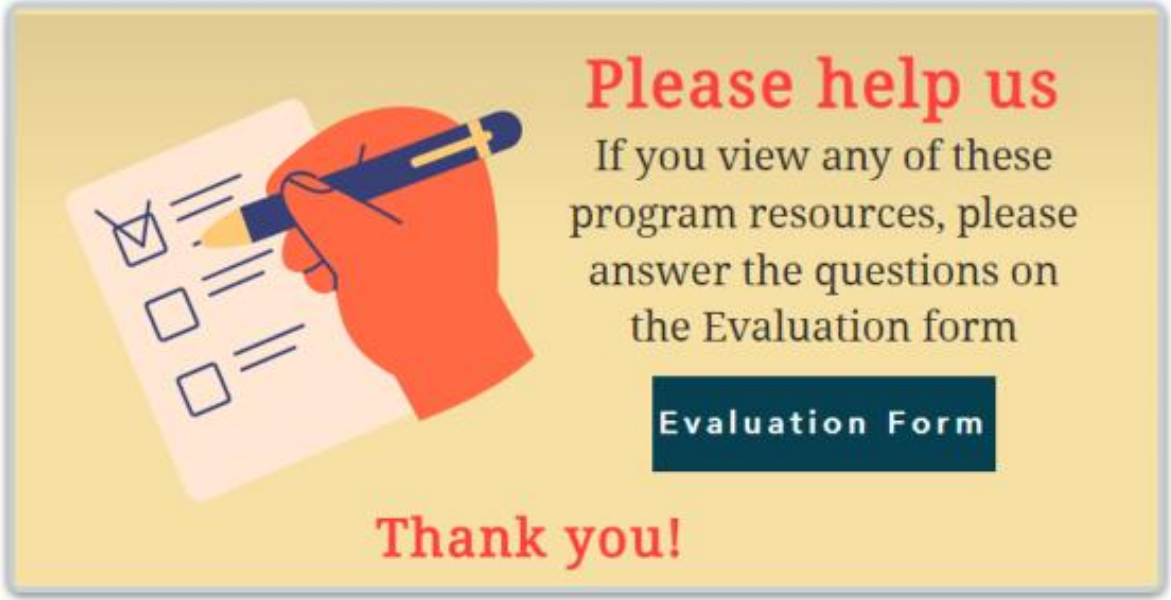
Our objective is to provide people with the tools and resources they need to create sustainable, healthy, backyard landscapes.

We hope to encourage community participation in the Backyard Wildlife Habitat and/or Backyard Sanctuary Certification programs.
And to create a network of community residents willing to share their love of gardening and the outdoors and to inspire others to use environmentally friendly gardening practices. Making the world a better place, one back yard at a time…

2022 BYC agenda

- **Rainwise gardening** – how to manage stormwater beautifully; from raingardens, to cisterns and more!"
- **Gardening for Pollinators** – Master Gardener and Entomologist, Virgene
- **Landscaping with Native Plants** – Brenda Cunningham, Skagit Native Plant Society (Salal Chapter)
- **Integrated Pest Management** - Diana Wisen, Master
- **Pet waste/ Water quality** -Karen DuBose Skagit County Public Works
- **Mulch & Mulching for the Backyard Gardener** – Ian Horton, Pacific Landscape Architecture
- **Invasive Plants of the Pacific Northwest** – Joseph Shea -Skagit County Noxious Weed control board
- **Sustainable Energy** -Hunter Hassig -Outreach Coordinator for Skagit & Snohomish PSE
- **Rainwater Harvesting** – CJ Huxford, Northwest Rain Solutions NW Rain Solutions
- **Backyard Composting** - Katryna Barber, Master gardener,
- **LID** - Skagit County Public Works

During our 6 week program, we will be looking at many ways we can improve the sustainability of our natural resources, improve water quality, and increase wildlife habitats.



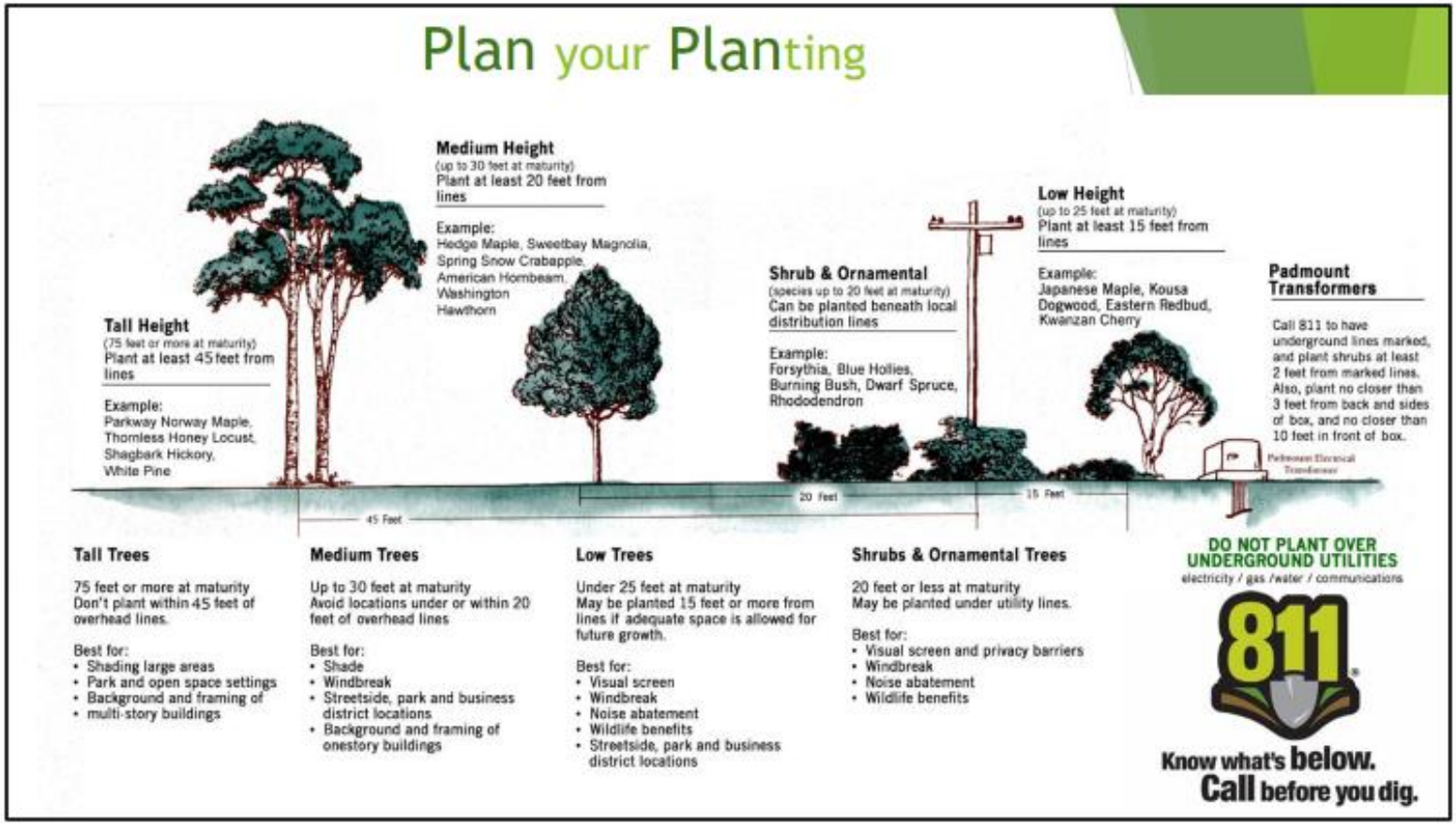
In order to rate the efficacy of our programs and resources we would like everyone who attends our classes or uses our online resources to answer the questions on the evaluation form. Please! It is very important to the continuation of the program. It only takes a minute.
Backyard Conservation Stewardship Program-Skagit Conservation (wix.com)

The presentations coming up will be showing some really awesome ideas that you will likely want to implement. Before we get there, I want you to be thinking about what you have to work with, because different areas have different needs and abilities. You can work **with** nature in what environment you live in or you can **battle against** it. Just because we **like** a particular style or concept, doesn't mean it is the best choice in our own backyard.

As you prepare to begin, start where you are, use what you have, and do what you can.
You don't need to start off with big expensive changes to make a difference.
Every little bit helps. Every little thread works together in the weave of the tapestry.
Every thread is important in the work.

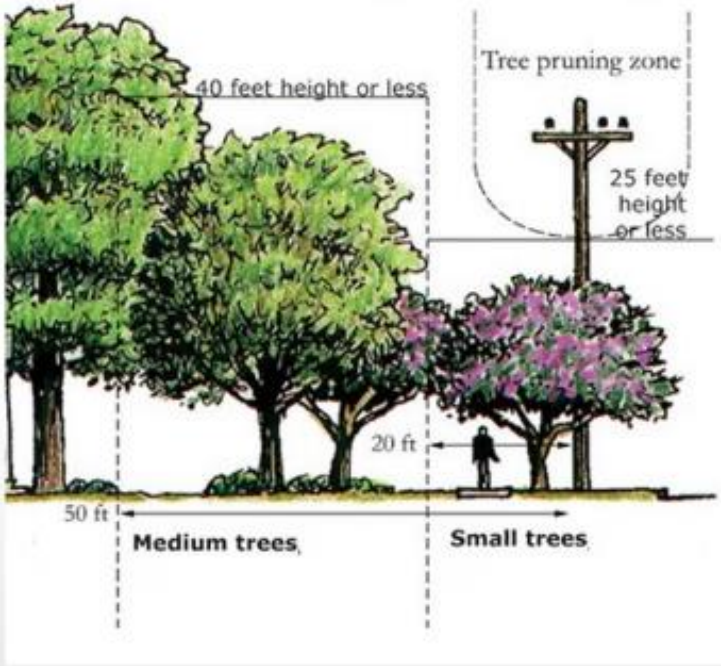
Over the next few weeks, you will hear people presenting ways to improve the health, beauty, and environmental productivity of your home and backyard.
The first step in making effective change is to evaluate what you have to work with. Maybe not so much with changes like recycling or using sustainable energy, but when dealing with nature, it can be critical. Keep in mind, the characteristics of the area you are working with. Is it flat? Is it Steep? Is it Wet or Dry? Sunny or Shady? The physical aspects that are there, will direct how you can or should proceed.

Plants have needs! But they don't all have the same needs. Some plants need more sun, some need more shade. Some plants need a lot of water, some need very little, and then everything in between…



Putting the right plant in the right place, not only increases the likelihood of a happier healthy plant, but also reduces the likelihood of big problems later. Pay attention to your site. Is there a house blocking the sunlight? Is the overhang of the roof restricting the amount of water getting to the plants underneath. Is there a powerline that the tree will grow into? Are there pipes underneath that roots will damage? Good planning at the beginning can prevent a lot of future headaches.

Plants in the wrong place Damage infrastructure, roadways, buildings, and utilities. They shortened the life span of plant, require excessive maintenance such as trimming, mowing, or shaping. They require excessive irrigation, fertilization, weed and pest control.

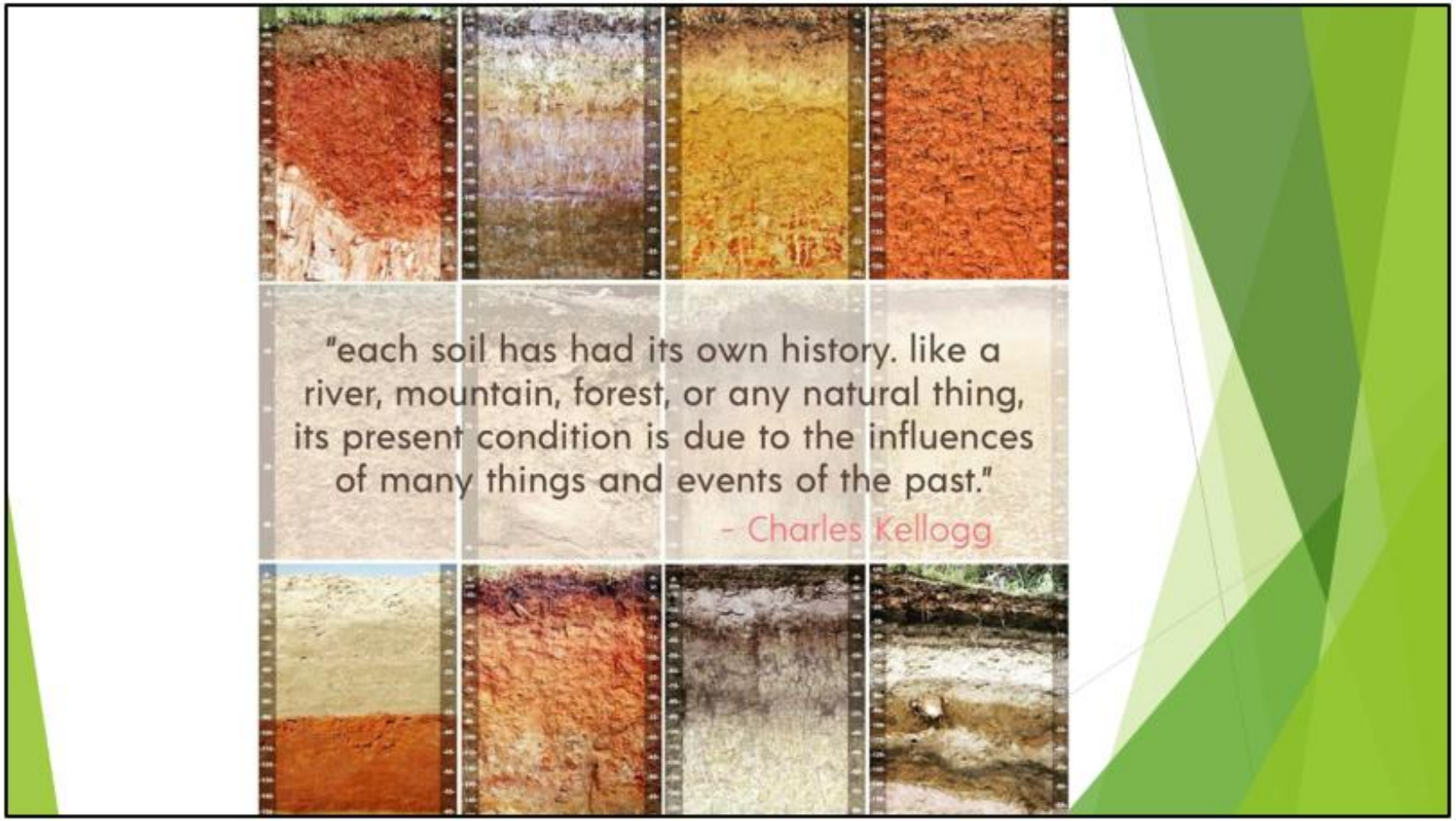


Proper planning and plant selection will avoid problems later

Plants in their proper environment require less maintenance, don't require extra water, fertilizer, or weed and pest control.

Create an enjoyable landscape with happy, healthy plants.

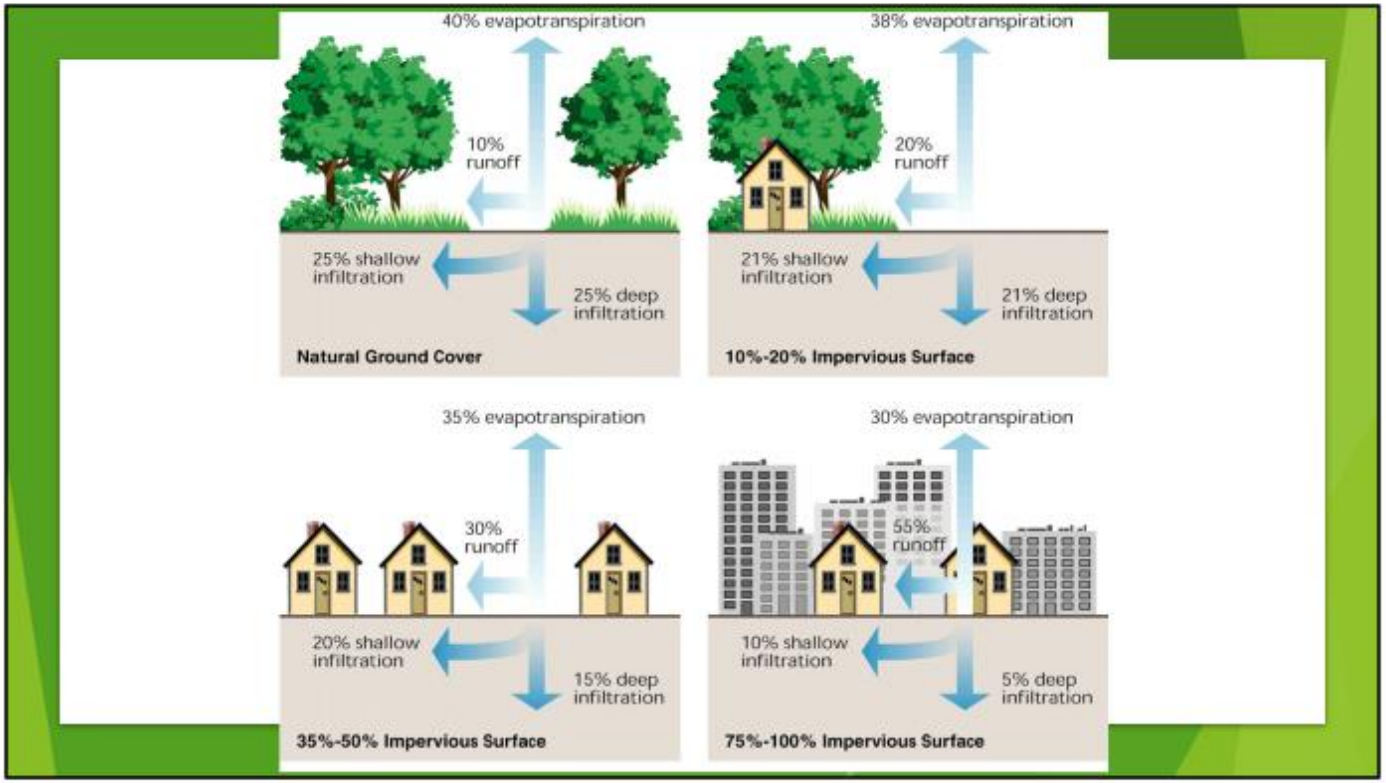
Ignoring the soil quality and the plants' growing requirements can lead to sickly plants. Do your homework before you plant! Pay close attention to the light and soil requirements of your plants as well as the plant's mature height and width. Picture your planting area totally filled in with the plants. Use stakes or other markers to help you visualize. Always consider the mature size of the plants and be sure to give them enough space!



The soil is the foundation of any planting. If you have done any significant digging, you know that all soil is not created equal. The soil in the fertile valley is much different than the rocky soil on the hill. Soil that is constantly waterlogged is much different than soil that is frequently dry. Soil that is covered by plants is much different than soil that is exposed to the elements. "Each soil has its own history. Like a river, mountain, forest, or any natural thing, its present condition is due to the influences of many things and the events of the past.

As the soil's history has shaped its current condition, its current condition affects its health and future condition. The things we do today (even small things) will have an effect.

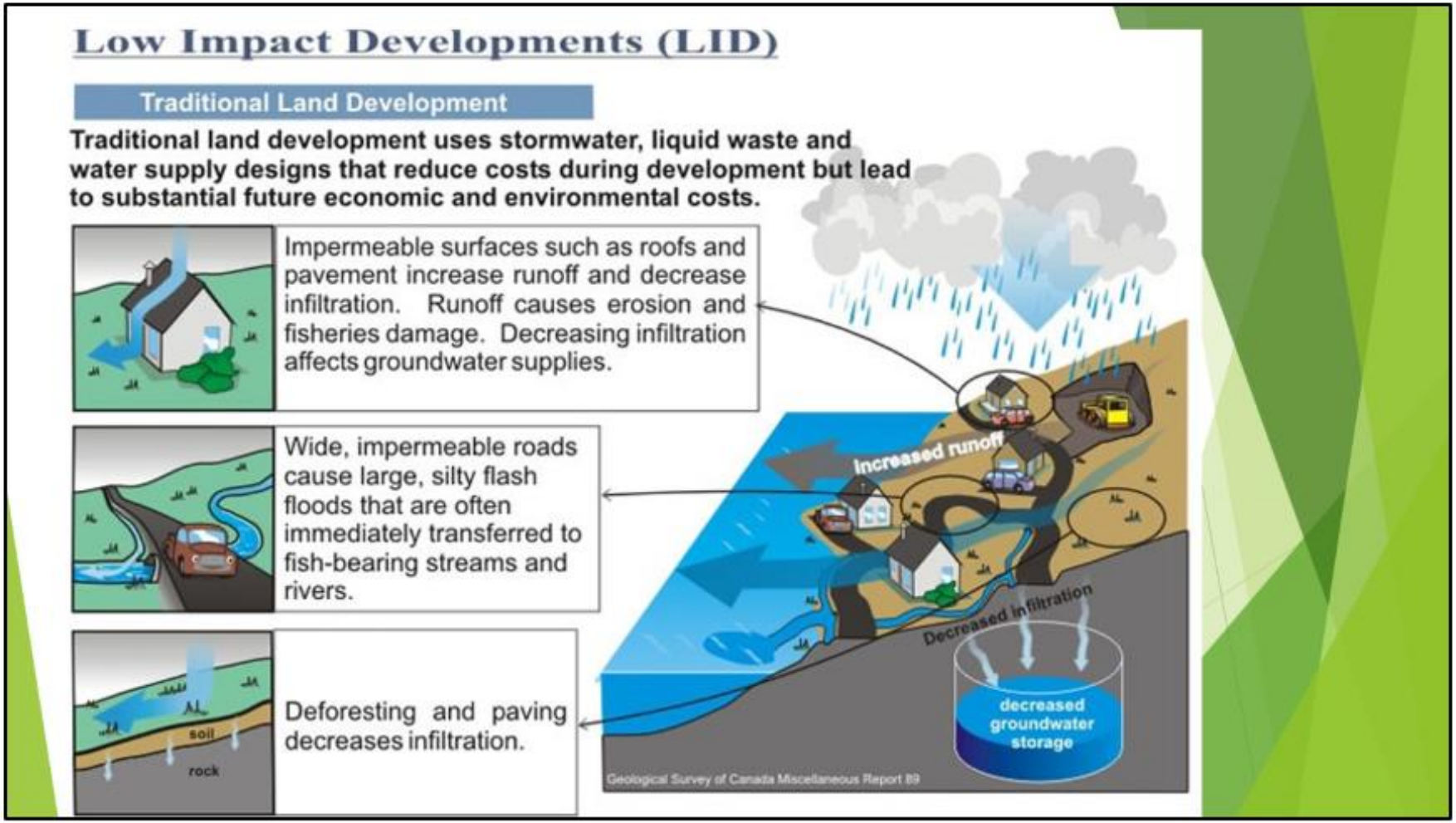
Things that affect the soil, affects plant life, which affects animal life, and believe it or not, even weather to some extent.



The amount of area covered by plants affects the amount of water that will infiltrate the soil. Fewer plants and trees frequently means more compact and impervious ground.

Greater impervious areas result in greater amounts of runoff.

Adding a road here or houses and businesses there is not necessarily a bad thing, but they do have an effect that needs to be taken into account.



Traditional development was concerned with solid foundations, good roads, and diverting water away from buildings.

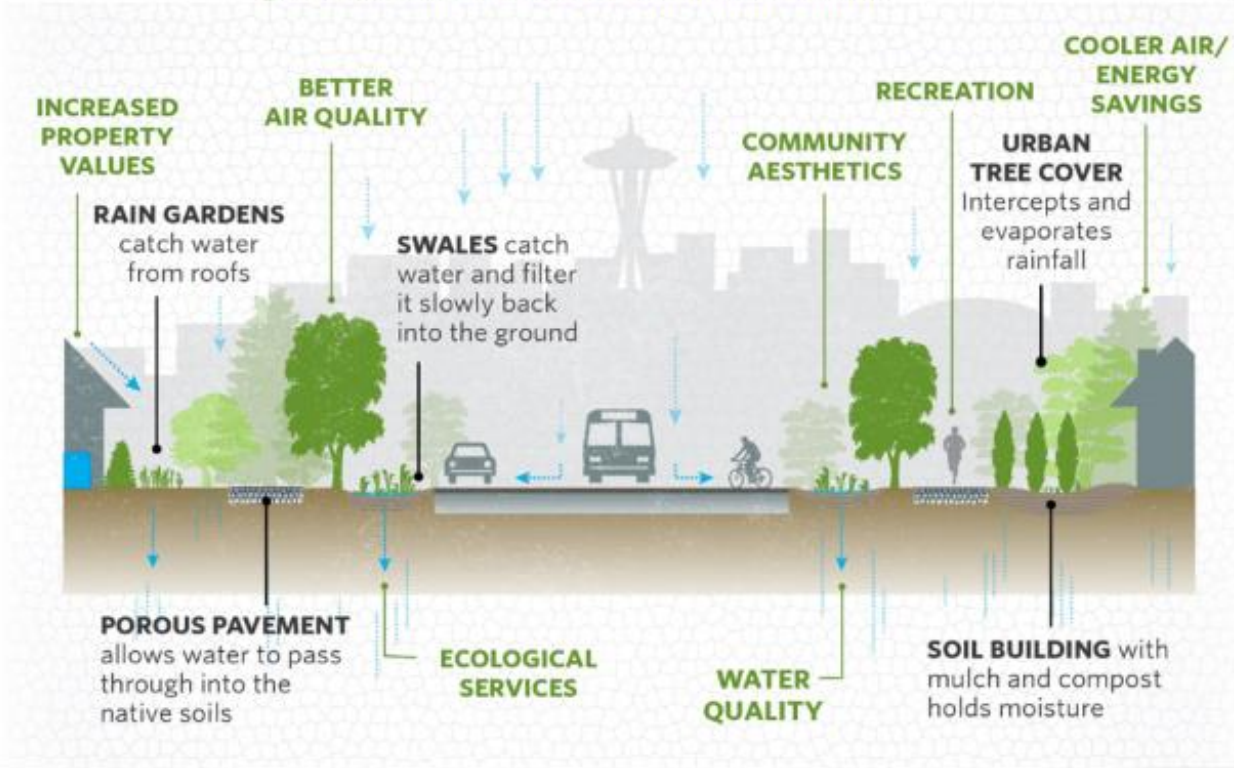
It didn't foresee the problems that would come with excessive water runoff such as polluted waterways and decreased ground water.

Historically, communities have used gray infrastructure, such as gutters, pipes, and tunnels—to move stormwater away from where we live to treatment plants or straight to local water bodies.

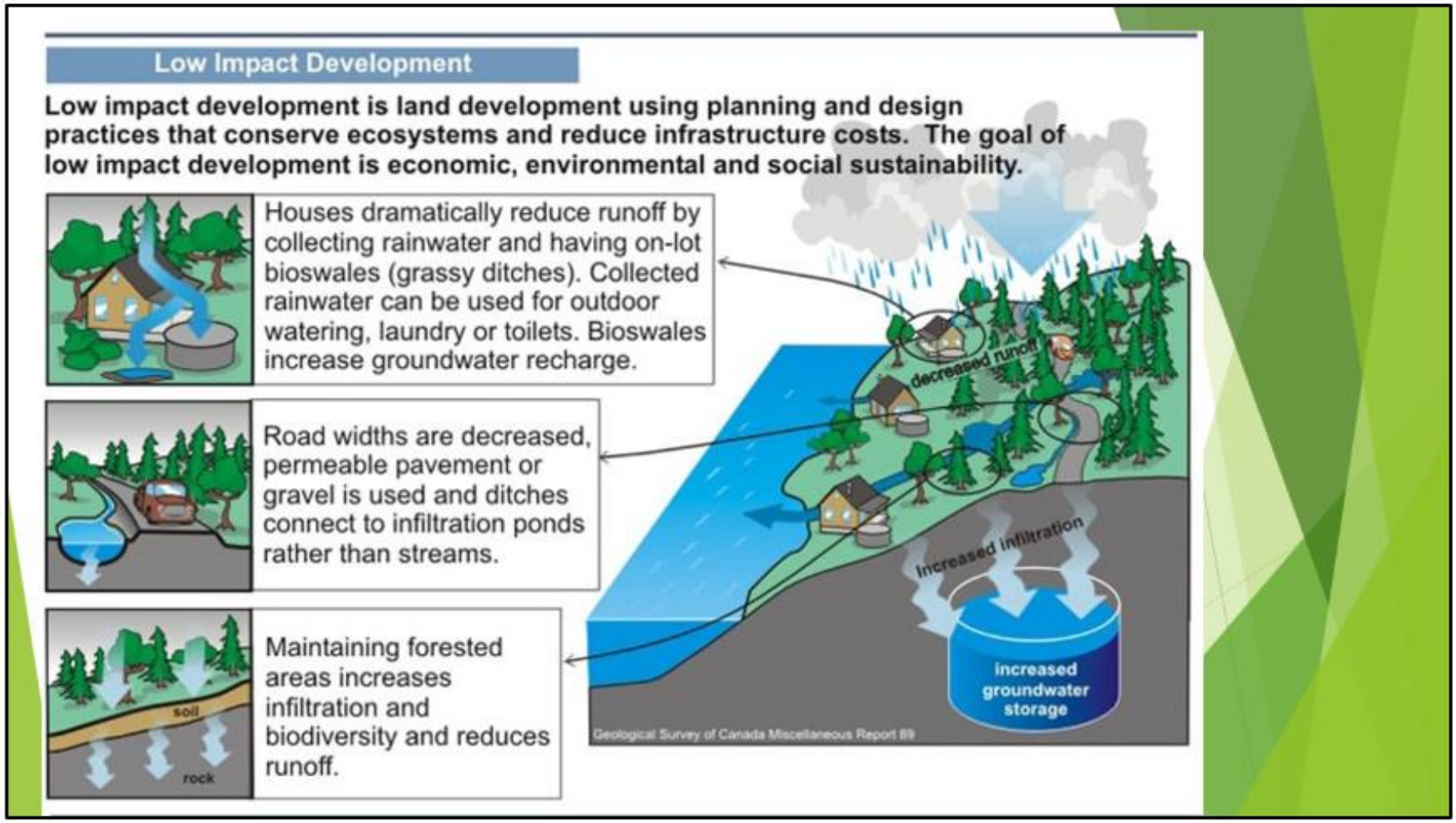
Unfortunately, runoff from stormwater carries trash, bacteria, heavy metals, and other pollutants directly into local waterways. Because the water runoff is direct, it can move quickly, so that heavy rainstorms can cause flooding that damages property and infrastructure.

Re-Thinking the Problem

Re-envisioning and re-designing cities to function more like forests so water is absorbed back into the ground, in addition to treating stormwater through traditional means will give us cleaner water and much, much more.



To meet the water run off challenge, many communities are installing green infrastructure systems to bolster their capacity to manage stormwater. Sometimes this is called Low impact development or LID.



LID reduces flooding on neighboring property, overflow in sewers, and erosion in streams by absorbing water from impervious surfaces.

It filter's the oil and grease from driveways, pesticides and fertilizers from lawns, and other pollutants before they reach the storm drain.

It increases the amount of water that soaks into the ground to recharge local groundwater and it provides habitat for beneficial insects and birds.

Soil Best Management Practices

New Construction

- Retain and protect native topsoil and vegetation (especially trees)
- Store and reuse topsoil from site
- Retain buffer vegetation along waterways
- Restore disturbed soils by adding compost

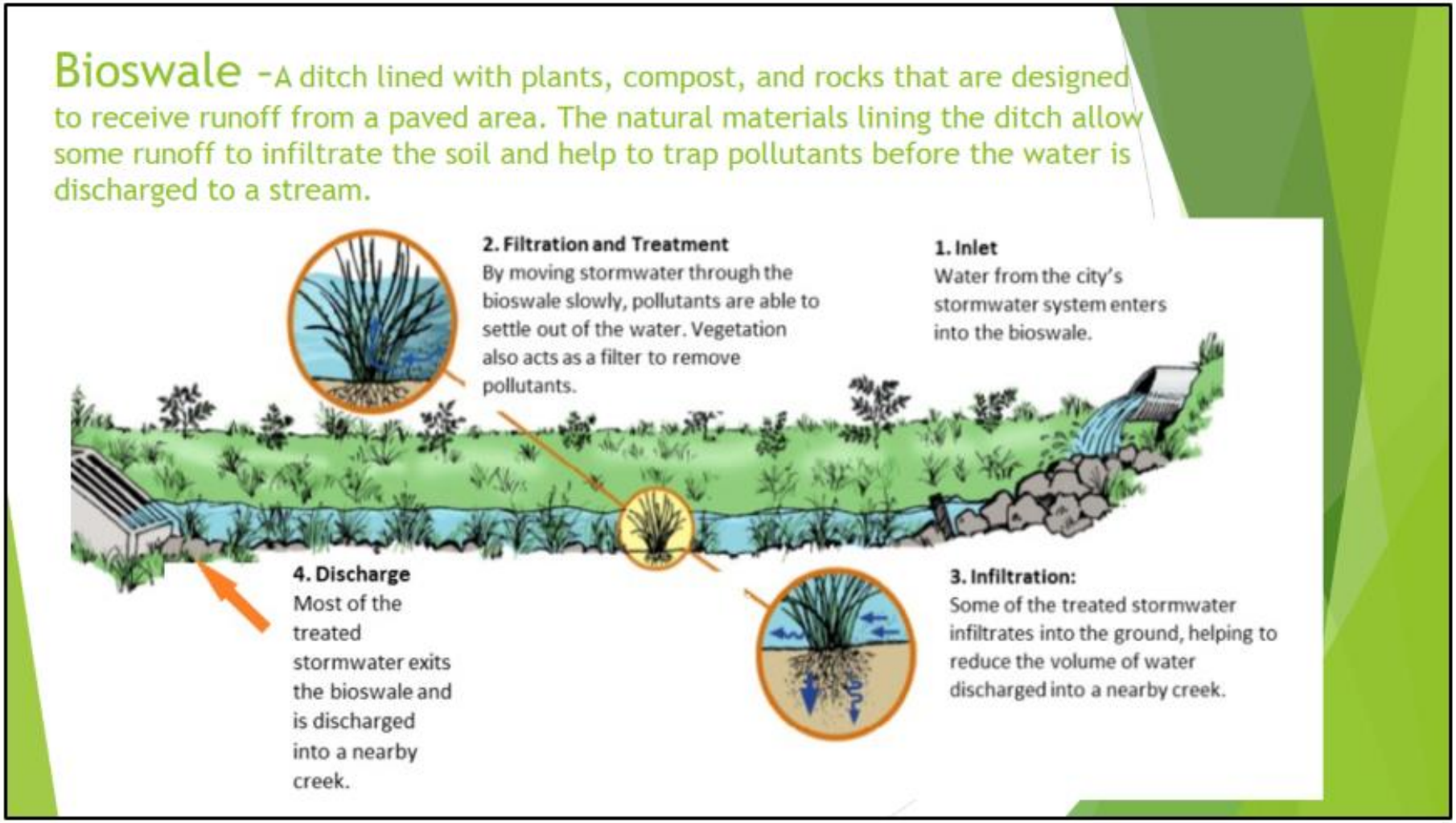
Existing Landscapes

- Retrofit soils with tilled-in compost when re-landscaping
- Mulch beds with organic mulches (leaves, wood chips, compost), and top-dress turf with compost
- Avoid overuse of chemicals, which may damage soil life

We have quite a bit of corrective work that needs to be done, but we are gaining ground now that we understand the problem.
We can implement productive changes to both existing areas and plan ahead on future projects to save a lot of corrective work later.

LID best management practices emphasize pre-disturbance hydrologic processes of infiltration, filtration, storage, evaporation, and transpiration.

Low Impact Development (LID) tries to mimic natural hydrologic conditions by emphasizing Conservation, Use of on-site natural features, Site planning, and design integrated into the project using Distributed stormwater best management practices (BMPs)



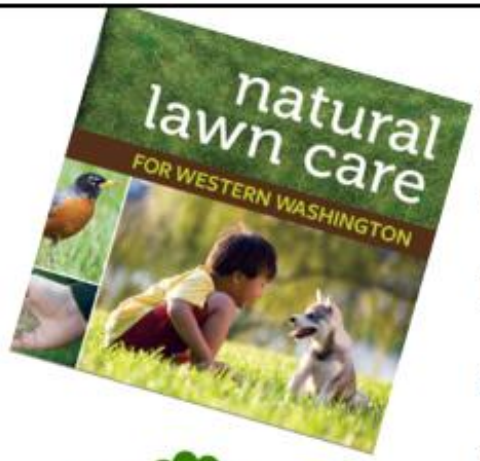
Plants in nature slow surface runoff and filter the water. They can do the same thing in our yards, parks and cities.

Bioswales are one of several Low Impact development strategies that will be discussed in our study.

Common LID practices include:

- bio-retention
- rain gardens
- permeable pavements
- minimal excavation foundations
- vegetated roofs
- rainwater harvesting.

LID significantly reduces the pollutant loads and stormwater runoff, it conserves water; and it saves builders and owners money.



What can we do?

Use natural yard care techniques;

Build your soil with compost;

Plant trees to slow and clean rainfall – especially natives;

Don't use pesticides;

Reduce use of fertilizers;

Use porous paving or pavers for walkways, driveways, or patios;

Maintain septic systems;

Fix oil leaks;

Pick up pet waste.

There are so many little things that we can do.
Small, simple things, that like the threads in a tapestry that work together to become a great thing.

Making our world a better place,
One backyard at a time.