



Southwest Trees & Turf



Volume 15 Number 9

October, 2008

swtreesandturf.com

Street Creeks Make Cool Streets *By Brad Lancaster*

In the rainy season, get out into a downpour. Dance in it, and look. Notice how stormwater flows along the street curbs like an ephemeral creek? That's because most of our street curbs *are* ephemeral creeks. Paved, heat-generating, flood-producing, water quality-worsening, *dead* creeks that rapidly drain water out of our desert community. Yet we have the potential to make them work like porous, shade-cooled, flood-controlling, water-filtering, living creeks that naturally infiltrate water into the soils of our community.

Over 30 percent of my hometown of Tucson, AZ surface area is paved with streets, buildings, parking lots, driveways, patios and sidewalks. This hardscape pavement, exposed to the sun, absorbs heat during the day like a battery and radiates it out at night. This has contributed to a 10 degree F rise in summer temperatures in Phoenix and a 6 degree F rise in Tucson temperatures since the 1940s.

This is not global warming. It is local warming, caused entirely by local efforts that in turn compound global warming. Because of the hotter summer temperatures, more people run their air conditioners, which are powered by electricity produced through the burning of coal. But we can easily turn this around.



After channeling street runoff water, the barren roadside (insert) is a lush, productive haven 10 years later. Photos courtesy: Brad Lancaster

In the 1970s the city of Davis, CA did a study that found that neighborhoods that shaded 75 percent or more of their hardscape in summer (typically with yard and street trees) were 10 degrees cooler than neighborhoods without such shading of hardscapes.

Now, let's tie that cooling shade and the street runoff together for great effect. In an average year of rainfall

(approximately 12 inches a year), the runoff from my Tucson neighborhood's 38-foot wide streets equals over 1.25 million gallons per mile! That's enough street runoff to provide all the irrigation needs for over 400 20-foot tall low-water-use native trees per mile, or a tree (needing 3,000 gallons of water per year) every 25 feet lining both sides of the street!

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Setting Successful Objectives *By Matthew Johnson*

As landscape professionals, we seem to focus on how we can do our jobs better with more education, training, equipment, and of course quality people. While there is no doubt that these carry a significant amount of importance, we tend to forget about some key areas of our relationship with customers.

Entertaining, communicating business-relevant issues, and building trust are commonly addressed, while helping the customer define objectives and set goals is rarely a topic. Sure, we may touch on issues within this area, but sitting down and putting objectives and goals on paper is usually the missing step.

Without clear objectives, it is difficult to devise a plan that will meet the needs and responsibilities of a property. Write down these objectives. Start with broad strokes and narrow them down into an outline or a format from which all can work. Objectives will vary greatly between a newly installed property and a property that has been around for 20 to 30 years.



Evaluating a client's needs and wants for a property will result in a management plan that will increase a site's value. Photo courtesy: Matthew Johnson.

A newer property will be focused on timelines for regular tree maintenance, granite top dress schedules, ongoing turf and soil conditioning, plant removal for space, and developing areas that were not addressed in the

original installation. An older property will vary, depending on the level of care it has had in the past. If it has been well maintained, many items will mirror those of a newer property. An

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For every inch of rainfall:

- a 10-foot wide paved street will drain 27,800 gallons of runoff per mile;
- a 20-foot wide paved street will drain 55,700 gallons of runoff per mile and
- a 30-foot wide paved street will drain 83,500 gallons of runoff per mile.

The rain and runoff can be harvested within mulched street-side basins about six inches deep, six feet wide, and 10 feet long, in which the street trees are planted. (These dimensions can change, but we should strive to keep the storage volume of the earthworks in balance with local runoff needing to be captured).

If the street has curbs, curb cuts may be needed to access the runoff. The City of Tucson now has a permit process and guidelines for street

runoff-harvesting curb cuts. Contact the transportation department for details.

This way the street and its runoff become the passive irrigator of the street trees that grow to shade over and cool the street. In addition, the street-side mulched earthworks absorb all street runoff, naturally filter the toxins carried in the stormwater, and control local flooding. The use of hardy native shade trees reduces maintenance, enhances the bioremediation of the earthworks, and creates more wildlife habitat – enhancing local songbird and native pollinator populations.

I've done this in my neighborhood, as have many of my neighbors. The key is to first "plant" the rain within water-harvesting earthworks. Then plant the trees. And whenever possible do it all together to learn with and help each other. This is one of the ways you end up living in a community of friends, rather than a community of strangers. These efforts will strengthen

the ties of community beyond just people.

Before water harvesting and tree planting, our home and street only supported exotic pigeons. Post-harvesting and planting we find the area now home to over two dozen native bird species attracted to the new habitat, shady microclimates, and food plants. Rain and runoff-irrigated food plants that we enjoy in the form of naturally sweet mesquite pods, peanut-flavored ironwood seeds, flowers and barley-flavored palo verde seeds, wild chiltipines, cholla flower buds, and more. See www.DesertHarvesters.org for more information about such harvests and community celebrations around them and a multi-use, low-water-use native tree list and order forms for Tucson and the surrounding area.

Enter "water-harvesting demonstration sites" in the website search box to get images and info on other public

rights-of-way water harvesting throughout the world – in particular check out Seattle's SEA Streets project and the Portland, Oregon Green Streets.

The idea is to live our daily lives in such a way that we enhance our local natural resources rather than deplete them, and to have fun as we do it. ▼ **Brad Lancaster is the author of the award-winning book "Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands and Beyond, Volume 1: How to Welcome Rain into Your Life and Landscape" and "Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands and Beyond, Volume 2: Water-Harvesting Earthworks."** He is also the creator of the information-packed website www.HarvestingRainwater.com. Lancaster will be speaking at Desert Green, October 23-24 at Sam's Town in Las Vegas, NV. For more information, visit www.desert-green.org.

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older property that has lacked years of proper care is where the hard work begins.

What are the areas of focus? A master-planned or condo development will have a different focus than a hotel, hospital, retail building, office building or industrial park. Start with the very basic idea that no matter what type of property one has, the need to attract people is almost always first. All of the sites mentioned above need to attract people to buy, stay, and invest their money or time. The only determination is if one wants to attract outsiders to come in, insiders to want to stay in, or both.

Homeowners want their homes to appreciate in value, which relies heavily on first impressions. It also relies on homeowners wanting to stay! Fewer people wanting to move equals fewer homes on the market. Hotels and hospitals rely on these same areas for different reasons. They need to present themselves as welcoming, friendly, comforting, secure, and confident.

After defining what aspects of the property affect the desired response, one determines what can be done to improve them. Design them as one would with any enhancement: find what the client likes and/or wants, attach a cost estimate to the improvements and begin prioritizing. One's role is also very important here. Are there items that need to be completed before other items can be started? As in the case of turf conversion, one is limited by the season. Are we looking for the biggest impact in the shortest amount

of time, or are we going to systematically work through the list in the most logical order? Do we want to get the biggest impact for the least amount of money even if it is not logistically the most efficient? Many times, in order to get the property owners or decision makers on board with changes, logical steps are not always possible.

Create a timeline showing when the projects will be executed and estimate how long they will take to complete. Create the budget using these timelines so funds can be allocated properly. While changes are inevitable along the way, there is a plan in place and goals to be met.

Helping to establish and meet a property's objectives and goals not only solidifies your relationship with the client but makes the property serviced look better and creates additional revenue. This is a win/win situation for everyone. ▼

Matthew Johnson is Co-Owner of Asset Landscaping in Phoenix, AZ specializing in commercial landscape management. He can be reached at Matthew@AssetLandscaping.com or 602.353.8877.

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News

TIFSPORT EXPANDS RANGE

West Coast Turf, the only licensed TifSport Bermudagrass producer on the west coast, has recently added "certified" TifSport at their Stevinson farm location in northern California.

Clay Wood, head groundskeeper for the Oakland Athletics, Oakland Raiders and McAfee Coliseum, has been buying grass from WCT for many years. West Coast's Greg Dunn suggested that Wood consider TifSport, a new and improved cultivar.

Despite the reputation of the Georgia-bred bermudagrasses, rising stars like TifSport sometimes take a while to attract notice simply because of the excellence of their tried-and-true predecessors like Tifway 419 and Tifway 2. Clay Wood became a TifSport convert, and West Coast Turf is converting new acreage to TifSport in northern California to make sure Clay Wood can get what he wants closer to home.

For more information, visit www.westcoastturf.com. ▼