

MAYOR'S COLUMN

After last week's very strong spring storm, I thought it important that individual homeowners understand what they can do to aid the Village in effective storm water management. This must be a community effort because we all live downstream from someone else and individual actions can affect everyone.

Home site water runoff is a concern because no matter where you live, it is in our watershed. A watershed is simply an area of land that drains to a specific point of water – in our case the Bronx River. Excess runoff can contribute to flooding and contaminated runoff affects water quality and wildlife habitat. Runoff carries with it whatever can be dislodged from a property such as salt, soil, leaves, pesticides, fertilizers, oil and gasoline. As more permeable surfaces are paved or built upon, more runoff is created. The unfiltered water enters our storm sewer system before entering the Bronx River.

Many communities are beginning to adopt the concept of “no net loss” of water from individual properties. This policy involves keeping and using the rain that falls on one's property at that property rather than sending it off site as storm water discharge.

Decisions made by individual homeowners can greatly reduce the quantity of runoff and improve the quality of the water that leaves one's property.

For example, when making renovation or landscaping decisions, consider alternatives to concrete or asphalt paved surfaces. Use more porous surfaces such as brick, gravel, wood chip, stone slabs or pavers. If areas must be paved, keep it to a minimum and direct the runoff onto grassy areas, not onto areas that drain into the storm sewer. Design landscaping to facilitate water retention and soil infiltration. Terracing the topography slows water runoff and natural plantings that are deep rooted allow for more water infiltration.

On the day-to-day level, avoid use of pesticides and non-organic fertilizers. These drain directly into our storm sewer system polluting all the Village runoff. Follow recommended watering practices and make sure sprinklers are calibrated so as not to water directly onto paved surfaces such as sidewalks and driveways. Clean up hazardous material spills properly and do not allow gasoline, oil or antifreeze to enter a storm sewer. Pet waste

has become a major contaminate to water systems. Waste placed in plastic bags then dropped in storm sewers causes the growth of dangerous bacteria.

If possible, use grass clippings for composting and fertilizing. If bundled, avoid locating them in areas that allow them to wash into sewers. Seed bare spots to help prevent soil erosion into the water system.

Now that the nice weather is here, check that roof gutters and downspouts drain to grassy surfaces not paved areas or in a direct path to a storm sewer. Water from downspouts can also be collected for other uses on one's property. Finally, when using a sump pump, do not discharge the water onto paved or impervious surfaces.

Excess water from individual properties does contribute to flooding and contaminated water can be costly to correct.

Many of the suggestions may seem rather simple or small but the cumulative effect throughout the Village can significantly contribute to improving our storm water management.