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Evansville company focuses on ecodriveways

By **GINA DUWE** ([Contact](#)) Tuesday, July 5, 2011

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EVANSVILLE — The world of impermeable surfaces is ever increasing.

Roofs, sidewalks, alleys, driveways and parking lots are continuously built.

"We're basically paving over nature's sponge," said John Gishnock III, ecological designer and owner of Formecology.

That hampers the ecological goal of getting rainwater into the ground rather than running off hard surfaces and impacting local waterways, habitat and erosion, he said.

"We want to keep our rainwater at home," he said.

For the homeowner, that means considering the second largest hard surface: the driveway.

People interested in reducing their environmental impact are turning to ecodriveways, which still perform the function of driving your vehicle from the street to the garage. The design, however, doesn't generate the stormwater that more traditional ones do.

Evansville's Gishnock and Formecology will be featured in a segment on ecodriveways in a Wisconsin Public Television show airing Thursday and Saturday. The program will focus on water conservation in gardening and landscaping.

"Wisconsin Gardener" will visit the home of Phil and Nancy Kress in Evansville, where Formecology designed and rebuilt the driveway using a cement-tread combined with a grass-and-turf-paver center. No-mow grass was planted in the paver holes.

"I was looking for an interesting look to the drive that matched the older neighborhood and architecture and would also protect and preserve nearby trees," Phil Kress said in an email. "I wanted something that would allow water to enter the soil rather than run off of a large area."

The driveway was built about 18 months ago, and Kress said he removes snow from the cement treads but doesn't shovel the center.

Formecology also built a rain garden to take water from the garage roof and remaining water from the driveway.

Building an ecodriveway revolves around three concepts: using permeable materials, reducing the footprint or using more traditional materials, and sloping a driveway toward a landscape feature such as a rain garden, Gishnock said.

Ecodriveways can be site-specific, budget-specific and client-specific, he said.

Installing an ecodriveway doesn't have to be just for new construction, he said. Homeowners who have a driveway in disrepair can consider this option as well.

"I don't suggest tearing up a perfectly good driveway," he said. "There are other things to lessen the load."

Photo



Photo by **Lukas Keapproth**

Phil and Nancy Kress' driveway features Formecology, an eco-driveway designed to improve water runoff.

Photo

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Photo by [Lukas Keapproth](#)

Phil and Nancy Kress' driveway features Formecology, an eco-driveway designed to improve water runoff.

Gishnock's industry also has a new program for green certification of building sites for landscaping.

"The future is moving us in a direction where sustainable landscape is going to be the cat's meow," he said. "What we're saying is you don't have to be green and comprise your beauty, budget and function."

To watch

A Wisconsin Public Television program on water conservation will feature Evansville's John Gishnock, owner of Formecology, in an episode to premier this week.

"Wisconsin Gardener" tapped Formecology for its expertise on ecodriveways. The program will include one of Formecology's ecodriveway projects at the Evansville home of Phil and Nancy Kress.

The program will air at 7 p.m. Thursday and 10 p.m. Saturday on Wisconsin Public Television. It also will be rebroadcast six times between July 14-19 on WPT's digital station, The Wisconsin Channel.

Lake shoreline being restored

Formecology is working on the first phase of restoration and beautification of the Lake Leota shoreline in Evansville, said John Gishnock III, ecological designer and owner.

The first step is to remove invasive and nonnative species, mainly reed canary grass and cattail species, from the public shoreline this summer, he said.

That will make way for future plantings, which will be more native wildflowers and grasses that will do a better job stabilizing the shoreline, providing habitat, reducing mowing and maintenance and also beautifying the lake, he said.

"Before we bring in the new, we have to get rid of the old, bad, woody, nonnative trees and shrubs," he said.

The company is working with the city's park board and will oversee volunteers. Work will continue in coming years as funding is available, he said.

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