

Too Much Rain? Build A Rain Garden...

Evansville Business Shows You How

By Tammy T. Pomplun

The flood of rain has been bad for many Janesville businesses, but one Evansville business is soaking up the rewards of the rain, and can help individuals and businesses do the same. John Gishnock III, owner of Formecology, LLC at 210 Cemetery Road, designs, builds and cares for regionally inspired and environmentally beneficial outdoor living environments for both homes and businesses, combining art with nature. In addition to helping soak up excess rain, designs by Formecology, LLC can minimize the use of pesticides, fertilizers, water and labor. Harmoniously integrating architecture and landscape, outdoor living environments such as patios, retaining walls and gathering spaces are created through the use of locally quarried stone and indigenous flora.

Rain gardens, prairie swales, rain barrels and drip- and resource-efficient irrigation systems are among the design features that will help reduce flooding while filtering storm water, replenishing groundwater and providing a bird and insect habitat. A rain garden is simply a shallow depression in a yard that is planted with native wetland or wet prairie wildflowers or grasses. It is designed to naturally collect water that runs off the roof or is discharged from a sump pump. Rain garden plants include New England aster, Riddell's goldenrod, red milkweed, dogtooth daisy, and other colorful flora. Formecology can also help those living near ponds or lakes with shoreline buffers and slope stabilization.

Do-it-yourselfers will also find the Formecology, LLC team helpful. "In addition to the 75 or so projects we do a year, we want to help empower those who want to do-it-themselves," said Mr. Gishnock. "That way we give back to the community and enlist people in sustainable living."

"Objectively our goal in 20 years is to see one in every five yards landscaped in more sustainable ways that don't impact the environment as much as traditional forms do. With that goal, we couldn't do it by ourselves. We want to share what we have learned."

The majority of Formecology's clients are from Southern Wisconsin and Northern Illinois and currently they are working on five sizeable projects in the northwest suburbs of Chicago - but "our backyard is where we would love to be most of the time, Dane, Rock and Green Counties."

John's commitment to fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of sustainable site design, installation and care has led him to present seminars and lectures throughout Wisconsin and across the nation, including Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Missouri and Maryland, to groups ranging from 20 to over 300. Topics include rain gardens, native landscaping and sustainable landscape features. This September, he'll be presenting a lecture at the UW Arboretum on using natural stone and walls in native gardens. He also works with architects, builders and construction companies in creating a

landscape design that enhances the architectural style of the building.

Being sustainable applies not only to their designs but also to the business itself. Their Bobcat has used biodiesel fuel; they're using smaller trucks and practicing other ways to reduce their impact on the environment. They'd like to acquire more land to start growing more of their own trees and shrubs so they don't have to drive to get inventory.

In addition to a focus on the environment and their craft, Formecology's focus is on their clients, their employees, and the community. Formecology has four full-time employees and several other part-time and temporary employees. Kara Gishnock, John's wife, works part-time as the bookkeeper and John is the lead designer and office manager. In the winters, John keeps busy giving seminars, working on designs, developing marketing and preparing the vision for the upcoming season. One vision John has is to offer products such as organic lawn care products, rain barrels and rain chains on their web site, www.formecology.com.

The Gishnocks, John and Kara, have lived in Evansville for the past three years. "We appreciate the old and the new, the people and the structures and can appreciate both points of views. It's an interesting, energetic contrast the community has. To me, that just creates energy. The differing views can be very energetic," said John.

John lived in Evansville previously and Kara has lived in Stoughton, and both knew Evansville would be a great place to come back to. "Everybody we have met, we really appreciate...our neighbors are great, warm and welcoming and sharing. The officials in the Town are welcoming."

They've involved themselves in the community, shopping and doing their business locally, and becoming involved in community organizations. They recently joined the Chamber of Commerce and John has served on a couple of Economic Development Task Forces and is now a member of the City of Evansville Planning Commission.

They've also volunteered their services for the Evansville High School Building and Trades Home, working with H.S. Agriculture teacher Jim Kvalheim on how to instruct the students to create their own environmentally-friendly design, treating them as if they were a client, helping them merge all their ideas into one final plan and helping to oversee a bit of the installation. They've also assisted in the vision and planning for the Evansville School District Forest.

Contact John at 882-6656, john.g@formecology.com to discuss your needs and wants in creating an environmentally friendly sustainable outdoor living space or to schedule a seminar.

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