**Julie Wilson is uncovering innovative approaches to stormwater management, even in your own backyard**

As the realities of climate change set in, cities need to pay attention to stormwater management if they want to avoid a flooding crisis, says Julie Wilson, Academic Coordinator for our Masters of Land and Water Systems program.

**Why is stormwater management important for cities?**

Urban centres are projected to grow in many parts of the world. They consume large amounts of resources and generate a lot of pollution. Stormwater management can help mitigate some of the environmental impacts. When rain falls onto the ground, especially in cities, the water can’t be absorbed back into the soil. Water that falls on impervious surfaces, like roads and parking lots, creates stormwater runoff, which is a phenomenon we don’t typically see in natural landscapes. During heavy rain events, excess stormwater can lead to flooding, which can have devastating consequences, both environmentally and financially, like in Toronto last July. Stormwater can also pick up oil and grease before going down a storm drain, where it eventually discharges into an ocean, river or lake, depending on where you are. This can have an adverse effect on habitat for fish and other organisms.

**What are some ways people can help manage stormwater at home?**

The driveway and the roof are the main sources of run-off to your stormwater system in a single-family home. One way to better manage stormwater is to detach your gutter’s downspout that connects to the storm sewer and replace it with a splash block or gutter chain. This allows water to run down and infiltrate into the soil on your property. Some homeowners create rain gardens below gutter chains, turning them into a water feature. It’s both functional and decorative. Replacing a large asphalt driveway with interlocking paving stones or pervious pavement will also help retain rainwater on your property. Changes on an individual property will not significantly reduce urban flooding, but multiply these small changes across an entire urban watershed and the cumulative effects can be considerable.

**Why should the average person know about stormwater management?**

Innovative stormwater designs can often be overlooked as we wouldn’t necessarily take notice of them in our everyday lives. But having awareness about these technologies can empower people to think about new developments being built in and around their communities, and ask whether these techniques are being implemented or not. Being knowledgeable about stormwater management makes us think about where we live a lot differently, which hopefully spurs people’s desires to be more environmentally conscious.

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