

## Earth & Sky: Up on the Roof

How can cities become more green? Discover how Washington D.C. and other urban areas are changing their landscaping and designing more sustainable urban ecosystems.

### Cities Ally With Nature to Solve Problems

From: *Earth & Sky Radio Series Program*  
August 21, 2005

JB: This is Earth and Sky. In places like cities, ecologists are looking at ways to maximize the ability of nature to provide us with essential services like clean air and water.

DB: At the moment, paved areas and rooftops of a city often cause real problems with water quality. Water that runs off over pavement gets to rivers and streams very quickly, and this water often carries pollution. Most storm gutter systems only remove water from property, but current systems do little to filter water.

JB: To comply with tougher water quality regulations, some urban areas like those around Washington D.C. are changing their landscaping — and designing more sustainable urban ecosystems. For example, “rain gardens” can be placed near buildings or in parking lots specifically to absorb and filter runoff. “Green roofs” accomplish the same thing with lightweight plants on rooftops. Margaret Palmer is a stream ecologist with the University of Maryland. She talked with us about using nature as an ally in solving environmental problems.

Palmer: Nature can do a lot of things for us if we’re clever about thinking about some of those solutions... And in general, the rule of thumb is, the less engineered the solution, the more likely it is to cause fewer problems in the environment, and also to be less costly.

DB: With thanks today to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, we’re Block and Byrd for Earth and Sky.

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## Earth & Sky

RADIO SERIES

The Earth & Sky radio series and website can be found at [www.earthsky.org](http://www.earthsky.org). The programs are produced by a non-profit organization committed to describing humans’ work to understand themselves and their relationship to the Earth. The information in the Earth & Sky website, and in the daily radio series, is developed from interviews with scientists. This information is supported with additional resources on their website.

Project Learning Tree has worked with Earth & Sky to provide additional resources for many of the radio shows. See [www.earthsky.org](http://www.earthsky.org) and [www.plt.org](http://www.plt.org)

