

## For Water's Sake, Make It Pervious!

It was hot, the A/C in the truck wasn't working, the dog needed a bath, and my other passenger was in a bad mood. "What's the hold up?!" Bob demanded as we sat in traffic on 28.

"Bob, they're repaving the road ahead. Nothing I can do about this."

"Asphalt!" he sneered and began singing a Joni Mitchell favorite: "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot, oolalala." Fortunately, he'd forgotten the rest of the words, but added "Ya know, it's made of heavy crude gunk, it smells, and just has to be bad."

I knew he was just hungry—it totally messes with his temperament. "Bob, I agree, but asphalt has its advantages. It's cheap. It's easy to ...". Bob interrupted, "What!? You, of all people, are defending this?" It was a little startling.

"Bob, this is a heavily used State road—asphalt is ok," I defended in a calming voice, determined not to let him ruin this otherwise beautiful day. "But if we're talking about driveways, private ways, and parking areas, there are much better choices. In addition to your criticisms, add that asphalt is impervious so storm water runoff must be dealt with effectively. Whereas pervious surfaces will allow rain water to seep through them, to be purified by the substrates as it finds its natural path to ground water."

"It all gets to the same place eventually. What's the difference?" I knew he'd have to disagree with me.

"No, Bob, pervious, or porous, surfaces are important. Here on the Cape we depend on the aquifer as our water source (unlike many other places in the country that use surface water reservoirs) and therefore, it's important that our rainwater is able to recharge groundwater, filter through vegetation and soils to clean the impurities before it meets our drinking water source. Bottom line, Bob, our drinking water comes from rain. That's it! If you take that rain water and shoot it into a drainage system that empties directly into another water body, that can be a problem."

"Aquifer?"

"Oh don't tell me you thought the town's water source was those colorful water towers?" I asked sarcastically (my stomach was now growling). Your drinking water comes from one of just a few large underground Cape Cod 'ponds' or aquifers. Our 'pond' needs to be replenished with lots of clean water. And Mother Nature can do a pretty good job of that if we don't interfere."

"I know what the aquifer is", Bob responded defensively. "It's lunchtime--my thinking's compromised."

I knew that, so suggested "Hey, let's stop here and get a sandwich....and I'll tell you about some *pervious* choices."

"I like the sandwiches idea, but..." Before he could finish I was listing them off: "In addition to gravel and shell and pea stone, there's also stabilized grass, 'grasspave blocks', porous pavers, even porous concrete and porous asphalt, and others! Plus they look so much better than just a black slab." Alas, I'd lost Bob. Only the dog was listening.

[Anyone out there who's interested in learning more about pervious options, for starters check out this website: [www.unh.edu/erg/cstev](http://www.unh.edu/erg/cstev) and ask your contractor or local purveyor to supply you with alternatives.]