



Design Objectives

- Maximize Infiltration
- Provide Retention
- Source Control
- Minimize Impervious Land Coverage
- Prohibit Dumping of Improper Materials
- Contain Pollutant
- Collect and Convey

Description

Alternative building materials are selected instead of conventional materials for new construction and renovation. These materials reduce potential sources of pollutants in stormwater runoff by eliminating compounds that can leach into runoff, reducing the need for pesticide application, reducing the need for painting and other maintenance, or by reducing the volume of runoff.

Approach

Alternative building materials are available for use as lumber for decking, roofing materials, home siding, and paving for driveways, decks, and sidewalks.

Suitable Applications

Appropriate applications include residential, commercial and industrial areas planned for development or redevelopment.

Design Considerations

Designing New Installations

Decking

One of the most common materials for construction of decks and other outdoor construction has traditionally been pressure treated wood, which is now being phased out. The standard treatment is called CCA, for chromated copper arsenate. The key ingredients are arsenic (which kills termites, carpenter ants and other insects), copper (which kills the fungi that cause wood to rot) and chromium (which reacts with the other ingredients to bind them to the wood). The amount of arsenic is far from trivial. A deck just 8 feet x 10 feet contains more than 1 1/3 pounds of this highly potent poison. Replacement materials include a new type of pressure treated wood, plastic and composite lumber.



There are currently over 20 products in the market consisting of plastic or plastic-wood composites. Plastic lumber is made from 100% recycled plastic, # 2 HDPE and polyethylene plastic milk jugs and soap bottles. Plastic-wood composites are a combination of plastic and wood fibers or sawdust. These materials are a long lasting exterior weather, insect, and chemical resistant wood lumber replacement for non structural applications. Use it for decks, docks, raised garden beds and planter boxes, pallets, hand railings, outdoor furniture, animal pens, boat decks, etc.

New pressure treated wood uses a much safer recipe, ACQ, which stands for ammoniacal copper quaternary. It contains no arsenic and no chromium. Yet the American Wood Preservers Association has found it to be just as effective as the standard formula. ACQ is common in Japan and Europe.

Roofing

Several studies have indicated that metal used as roofing material, flashing, or gutters can leach metals into the environment. The leaching occurs because rainfall is slightly acidic and slowly dissolved the exposed metals. Common traditional applications include copper sheathing and galvanized (zinc) gutters.

Coated metal products are available for both roofing and gutter applications. These products eliminate contact of bare metal with rainfall, eliminating one source of metals in runoff. There are also roofing materials made of recycled rubber and plastic that resemble traditional materials.

A less traditional approach is the use of green roofs. These roofs are not just green, they're alive. Planted with grasses and succulents, low- profile green roofs reduce the urban heat island effect, stormwater runoff, and cooling costs, while providing wildlife habitat and a connection to nature for building occupants. These roofs are widely used on industrial facilities in Europe and have been established as experimental installations in several locations in the US, including Portland, Oregon. Their feasibility is questionable in areas of California with prolonged, dry, hot weather.

Paved Areas

Traditionally, concrete is used for construction of patios, sidewalks, and driveways. Although it is non-toxic, these paved areas reduce stormwater infiltration and increase the volume and rate of runoff. This increase in the amount of runoff is the leading cause of stream channel degradation in urban areas.

There are a number of alternative materials that can be used in these applications, including porous concrete and asphalt, modular blocks, and crushed granite. These materials, especially modular paving blocks, are widely available and a well established method to reduce stormwater runoff.

Building Siding

Wood siding is commonly used on the exterior of residential construction. This material weathers fairly rapidly and requires repeated painting to prevent rotting. Alternative "new" products for this application include cement-fiber and vinyl. Cement-fiber siding is a masonry product made from Portland cement, sand, and cellulose and will not burn, cup, swell, or shrink.

Pesticide Reduction

A common use of powerful pesticides is for the control of termites. Chlordane was used for many years for this purpose and is now found in urban streams and lakes nationwide. There are a number of physical barriers that can be installed during construction to help reduce the use of pesticides.

Sand barriers for subterranean termites are a physical deterrent because the termites cannot tunnel through it. Sand barriers can be applied in crawl spaces under pier and beam foundations, under slab foundations, and between the foundation and concrete porches, terraces, patios and steps. Other possible locations include under fence posts, underground electrical cables, water and gas lines, telephone and electrical poles, inside hollow tile cells and against retaining walls.

Metal termite shields are physical barriers to termites which prevent them from building invisible tunnels. In reality, metal shields function as a helpful termite detection device, forcing them to build tunnels on the outside of the shields which are easily seen. Metal termite shields also help prevent dampness from wicking to adjoining wood members which can result in rot, thus making the material more attractive to termites and other pests. Metal flashing and metal plates can also be used as a barrier between piers and beams of structures such as decks, which are particularly vulnerable to termite attack.

Redeveloping Existing Installations

Various jurisdictional stormwater management and mitigation plans (SUSMP, WQMP, etc.) define “redevelopment” in terms of amounts of additional impervious area, increases in gross floor area and/or exterior construction, and land disturbing activities with structural or impervious surfaces. The definition of “redevelopment” must be consulted to determine whether or not the requirements for new development apply to areas intended for redevelopment. If the definition applies, the steps outlined under “designing new installations” above should be followed.

Other Resources

There are no good, independent, comprehensive sources of information on alternative building materials for use in minimizing the impacts of stormwater runoff. Most websites or other references to “green” or “alternative” building materials focus on indoor applications, such as formaldehyde free plywood and low VOC paints, carpets, and pads. Some supplemental information on alternative materials is available from the manufacturers.

Fires are a source of concern in many areas of California. Information on the flammability of alternative decking materials is available from the University of California Forest Product Laboratory (UCFPL) website at: <http://www.ucfpl.ucop.edu/WDDeckIntro.htm>