



Green Infrastructure Partnership

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Topsoil: *Just How Do You Obtain a Performing Topsoil Layer, to Advance Rainwater Management and Water Conservation Goals?*

Green Infrastructure Partnership develops primers to provide municipal staff and designers with a starting point for law, policy and technical decisions

Topsoil Importance

“An absorbent topsoil layer has emerged as a fundamental building block for achieving *water sustainability outcomes* through implementation of green infrastructure practices. In this case, the targeted water sustainability outcomes are: less irrigation water use; and reduced rainwater runoff,” states **Raymond Fung**, Chair of the Green Infrastructure Partnership (GIP).

- **Rainwater Management:** An absorbent topsoil layer serves as a sponge when it is raining, results in healthier landscaping, and contributes to *sustainability of aquatic habitat*.
- **Water Conservation:** Well-rooted landscaping then requires less irrigation, stays green longer during a drought, and contributes to *sustainability of water supply*.

In collaboration with three municipalities, the GIP has developed two primers for local government staff: one deals with *Law and Policy*, and the other is a *Technical Primer*.

“Our vision is that the Topsoil Primer set will help local governments throughout BC ensure that a healthy layer of topsoil is a priority for, and survives, the development and re-development processes. If we can show how to get the topsoil part right, then other parts of the water sustainability equation are more likely to follow,” states **Susan Rutherford**, member of the GIP Steering Committee and author of the *Law and Policy Primer*.

About the Topsoil Primers

The Topsoil Primers are built on the experience the GIP has gained, since 2004, in promoting green infrastructure approaches to development in British Columbia, through series such as [“Showcasing Innovation – Celebrating Green Infrastructure”](#).

In spring 2009, following the [Surrey Water Balance Model Forum](#), the GIP Steering Committee and other Forum organizers realized there could be a benefit to providing municipal staff and the professional design community with a succinct statement of all of the legal, policy and technical “essential elements” necessary to successfully implement a specific green infrastructure objective.

“The Topsoil Primer set is the fruit of that idea, and the first in what the GIP hopes will become a series of Primers,” explains **Susan Rutherford**. “The Primers are premised upon the theme of *shared responsibility* – essentially recognizing that the responsibility for ensuring that development is sustainable rests with *all* who make decisions or take actions that impact the development process, from elected representatives, to staff and consulting professionals.”

“The Topsoil Primer set reflects and incorporates the experience and lessons learned by the City of Surrey, the City of Courtenay and the District of North Vancouver in pioneering implementation of absorbent landscape policies and requirements. Also, these municipalities provide both the greenfield and retrofit perspectives,” adds **Raymond Fung**.