

Where Will All That Water Go?
Elaine Cameron
Angelina Master Gardener

Angelina County had almost 80 inches of rain in 2004 and the rain continued during January. Landscape projects have been put “on hold”. However, the rain causes us to ponder drainage or “where will all that water go?” Observe your property and note where the water is draining and use that in planning landscape projects.

Concrete slab foundations can be damaged by changing soil moisture. Water in a crawl space under a pier and beam home can invite mold, mildew, rot and termites. Water needs to drain away from the foundation, and should not “pond” within six feet of a concrete slab. After adding soil always check that it slopes away from the house. Soil and mulch materials must be kept below the joint where the concrete slab meets the brick veneer or siding, to prevent water or termites from entering your home. Cats often disturb soil, so check frequently to keep all areas of the joint open.

Gutters drain water from the roof, and downspouts need to be positioned so water drains away from the house. Use splash guards to prevent soil erosion under the downspout. Gutters must be kept free of leaves and pine straw. Damp organic material prevents drainage, will rot wood on the edge of the roof, and makes a welcome home for carpenter ants. Leaf guards are available for gutters and make gutter cleaning much easier.

Some homes do not have gutters because the roof overhang helps water drain well away from the foundation. A row of low growing shrubs in the drip line will help disperse water drips and prevent erosion.

Landscaping near the house needs planning so it will be attractive without interfering with drainage or maintenance. Shrubs and trees will absorb water which may dry out slab foundations excessively during dry seasons. Root systems may cause uplifting of the edge of the slab foundation. Shrubs should be planted no closer than three to four feet from the foundation. After planting check to ensure the soil slopes away from the house. Trim shrubs so foliage is not touching the house to prevent mold, mildew and rot of siding materials. Check foundation beds for small “weed” trees that may have germinated from acorns or seeds and pull them out.

When planting trees, check the mature height of the tree and plant that distance from the foundation. Some fast growing trees, such as cottonwood and weeping willow, have aggressive root systems and should not be planted near the house. Trim tree branches so they do not extend over or touch the house.

Air conditioners drain large amounts of waters during humid summers. Be sure that all drains are allowing water to drain away from the house. A length of drainage hose connected to the drain will allow you to redirect the water.

Mark your calendars: Angelina County Extension and Angelina Master Gardeners will host the *Greater East Texas Gardening Extravaganza* on Saturday, April 2 from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm at Pitser Garrison Civic Center. Featured speakers include Steve Bender, Brenda Buest Smith, Greg Grant and Dr. Jerry Parsons. Visit our website www.go-lufkin.com/mastergardeners for more information and to download registration forms.