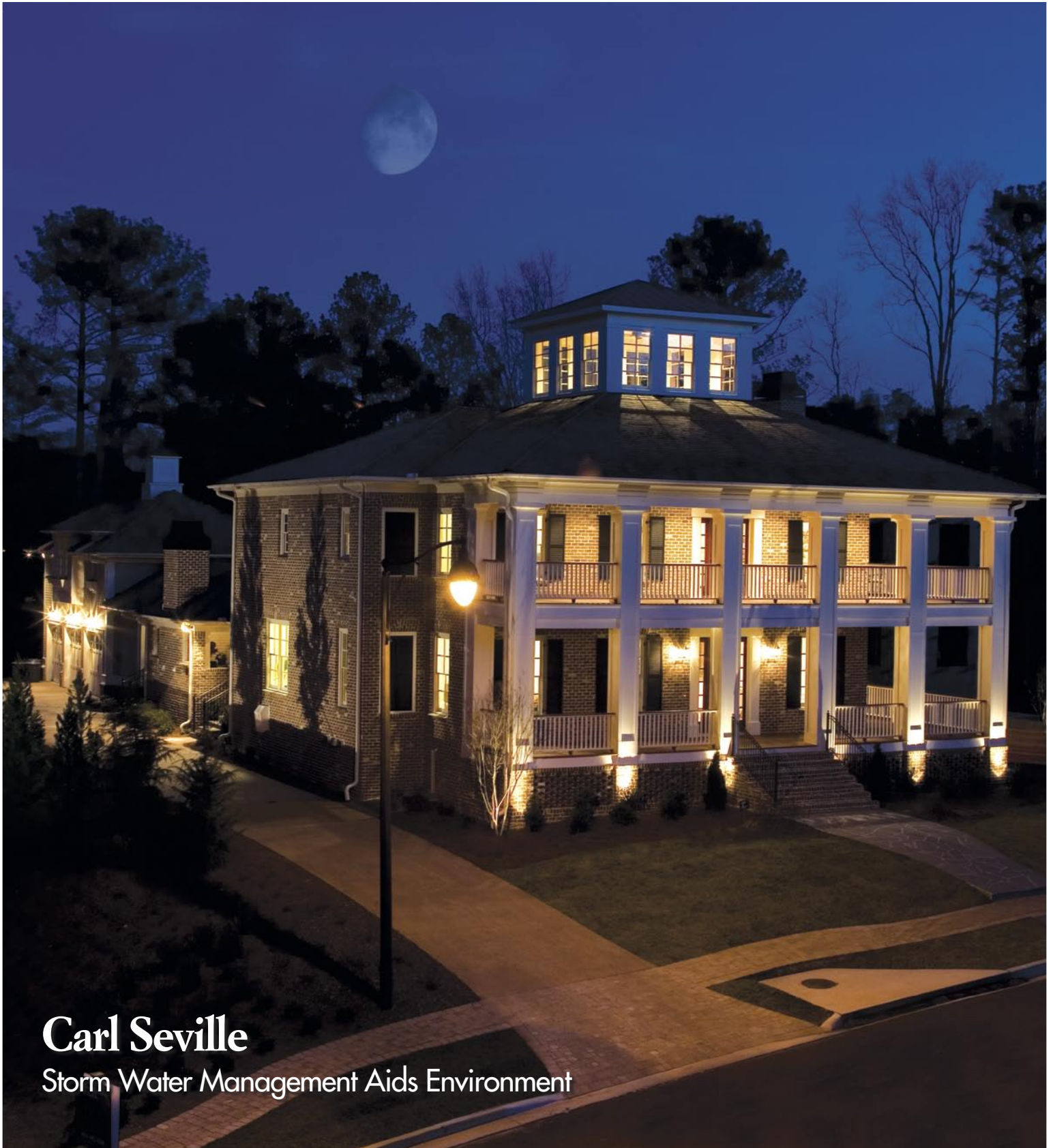

Today's
CUSTOM HOME

ATLANTA'S COMPLETE GUIDE TO BUILDING OR REMODELING YOUR CUSTOM HOME



Carl Seville

Storm Water Management Aids Environment



Precious Resources

Storm Water Management Aids Environment

By Carl Seville

To reduce pollution from runoff, consider installing less paving and replacing it with more landscaped areas that will allow water to percolate through the earth.

It's repeatedly been the top headline in the paper and has been discussed almost daily on the local news. The current drought has undoubtedly caused hardships, and it also has focused our attention on a major factor limiting our region's growth and environmental health.

Buildings, roads and other man-made structures contribute significantly to the pollution of our scarce water resources, both during and after construction. State and federal laws require that builders control runoff from their jobsites, which, when done correctly, helps to reduce the amount of silt filling our lakes and rivers. After completion, when the bare earth is fully covered with plants, paving and buildings, this silt oftentimes is replaced by chemicals such as motor oil, anti-freeze and pesticides that wash off our streets in the rain and end up in our waterways.

On a project-by-project, house-by-house basis, we can make a real difference in the amount of pollution that flows off our properties. When you are having a house built or expanded, ask your contractor to install effective erosion control measures. The most common product, a silt fence, works well, as long as it is properly maintained and repaired when necessary. Other more ecological products, such as mulch berms and compost retention socks (www.filtrex.com), can do a better job of retaining silt and pollutants, and they naturally degrade into the soil, eliminating costly removal after construction.

To reduce pollution from runoff, consider installing less paving and replacing it with more landscaped areas that will allow water to percolate through the earth. This process naturally filters out most chemicals before they reach the water table. When areas must be paved, consider using porous materials such as pervious concrete, porous paver blocks or grass pavers. These materials keep water from running off the property, working like landscaped areas to filter water through the soil (www.perviouspavement.org).

Since every project will create rainwater runoff, we must look for ways to limit the amount that leaves our properties. In response to the drought, there has been increased interest in rain water retention. These systems collect water off roofs into barrels or storage tanks, saving it for irrigation. With proper treatment, it can replace water used in the house. One inch of rainwater collected from a 1,000-square-foot house will prevent more than 500 gallons of water from flowing off your property, and, if properly reclaimed, will save that same amount from coming out of our municipal water systems (www.rainharvestcompany.com).

Water conservation and preserving water quality are vital issues that, as we have recently seen, can have a tremendous impact on our daily lives. While we can't control the elements, we can have a real impact on our environment simply by making a few sound decisions during the construction and renovation of our homes.



Carl Seville is a green builder, consultant, educator and writer on sustainability. He founded, and for 25 years served as Vice President of, SawHorse, Inc., an Atlanta design/build firm. Through Seville Consulting, his firm helps homeowners and builders create healthy, efficient and durable buildings by incorporating sustainable practices. Visit www.sevilleconsulting.com for more information