



Saving and Amending Topsoil

Background Information

Topsoil, which contains organic matter, is often removed when sites are graded during construction. The removal of topsoil, and compaction of soil by heavy equipment during construction, reduces the land's ability to absorb water, leading to increased imperviousness, especially in clay soils.

By saving and replacing the topsoil removed during construction, or amending soil with organic materials such as compost, the perviousness of the land can be re-established.

In addition, phased construction, in which smaller areas are cleared and graded, can help reduce imperviousness. Phased construction requires smaller grading equipment, which lessens the extent of areas affected by compaction and other disturbances. It also reduces exposed soils, on-site erosion and off-site sediment transport.

Community Strategies

- Require the saving and reuse of topsoil on site, or the amendment of soil with organic materials after construction.

At a Glance

- Removal of topsoil during construction increases imperviousness on site.
- Saving and replacing topsoil, or amending soil with organic matter, can help retain the site's ability to absorb water and prevent runoff.
- Phased construction can help reduce imperviousness since the smaller equipment used lessens soil compaction.

Saving and Amending Topsoil

Examples



For More Information

[Manual of Standards for Erosion Control Measures by the Association of Bay Area Governments and California State Water Resources Control Board, Order from <http://store.abag.ca.gov/environment.asp#ec1>](http://store.abag.ca.gov/environment.asp#ec1)

[CA EPA State Water Resources Control Board Non Point Source Pollution Control Program <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/nps/index.html>](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/nps/index.html)

[CA Nonpoint Source Encyclopedia by CA EPA and State Water Resources Control Board <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/nps/encyclopedia.html>](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/nps/encyclopedia.html)

[Sonoma County Vineyard Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance \[www.sonoma-county.org/agcomm/vesco.htm\]\(http://www.sonoma-county.org/agcomm/vesco.htm\)](http://www.sonoma-county.org/agcomm/vesco.htm)

Monique Myers, D.Env
Coastal Community Development Advisor
California Sea Grant
UC Cooperative Extension
669 County Square Dr, Ste 100
Ventura, CA 93003-5401
(805) 645-1482
nicmyers@ucdavis.edu

Photo Credits

Monique Myers