



**February 2008
Newsletter**

Landscaping News from the Sol



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In this edition we'll give you some information about installing wells. We'll also talk about rainwater collection systems and eco-friendly landscape practices. The needs to conserve water and be kinder to our environment are important now and going forward. Solterra is committed to providing education and services to help achieve this need.

- Dixie



Inside This Issue

- Deep Subjects: Wells
- Rainwater Collection
- Eco-Friendly Practices

*"Wish not so much to
live long as to live well."*

-Benjamin Franklin

Deep Subject: Wells

Have you been wondering what it would take to have a well installed on your property for irrigation? We have researched the subject, and here are some things to consider.

The well location is regulated by both the local county and state governments. An excerpt of the Georgia Water Wells Standards Act of 1985 states: "...all new wells must be located at least the following horizontal distances from the following structures:

- (I) Not less than ten (10) feet from a sewer line;
- (II) Not less than 50 feet from a septic tank;
- (III) Not less than 100 feet from a septic tank absorption field;
- (IV) Not less than 150 feet from a cesspool or seepage pit; and
- (V) Not less than 100 feet from an animal or fowl enclosure."

Additional county requirements include:

Cobb County: 10 feet from property line, 50 feet from house or permanent structure, health department for inspection/approval of the well site with a fee.

Fulton County: 50 feet from property line, health department inspection/approval of the well site.

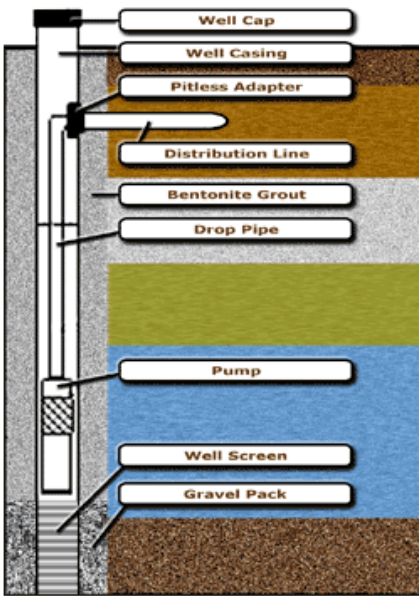
DeKalb County: 10 feet from property line.

Another site consideration is access. The drilling equipment has to access the site to be drilled. Picture 60,000-65,000 lbs of equipment, as wide as 2 concrete mixing trucks side by side, but longer in the back. In a housing area with 1/3 acre lots, muddy water can flow downhill across several adjacent properties and into the street. A polite neighbor would get approval from other neighbors for patience during drilling, and permission to clean mud from their properties.

The Well cap must be kept at least 1 foot above the ground level. It can be



Well cap



camouflaged with hollow rocks and/or landscape plants, as long as there is clear access around the well cap. The quality of materials used in well construction is an important factor, and depends on the composition of the soil particles and local county requirements.

Costs range from \$6,000 to \$25,000, depending on drilling depth, casing pipe material, pump and filter system, county fees, water testing and equipment, water storage tank (for low flow wells), irrigation connection costs, cleanup of mud and debris, restoration of turf, landscape plants, and damaged irrigation / hardscape features. If the contractor drills to 600 feet and doesn't hit water, the well won't work, but you still incur all the costs for drilling and cleanup.

The main benefit of having a well for irrigation is that water used for irrigation will not be on your next water bill. Plus some levels of drought restrictions allow land to be irrigated from a well. However, for larger properties, it is important to know that a single well may not always be able to supply all of a property's irrigation needs every time. If the well runs dry for a period, a switchover can be installed to go between well water and city water.

Because of the drought, well drillers in our area have a backlog of work, and there's a 2½ - 5 month lead time for the drilling appointment. Drillers are only 1 piece of the pie. Call Solterra today if you'd like us to manage the whole project with the county, a geologist, drillers, pump installers, water testers, cleanup and restoration. ☀

Rainwater Collection

By now many of you have seen or heard about rain barrels to collect to downspouts for water collection. Most of these have small storage capacity of 50 gallons. Larger ones exist but are not pretty to look at. The barrels or tanks appropriate for above ground installation are very useful for connecting a garden hose to their outlet and hand-watering thirsty flower beds, pots, or shrubs and trees within reach. The typical costs of a 50 gallon rain barrel is \$100 - \$150 plus delivery and installation.

For larger capacity storage tanks, underground cisterns that collect water from downspouts or grey water sources and utilize a pump to supply water to an irrigation system can be installed. The installation would require use of heavy equipment to dig a large hole and transport the cistern tank into place. This option may not be much less than the cost of digging a well; however, it does not require permitting, may be viable for some properties where a well is not, and would probably be less mess during installation. Solterra is currently researching and evaluating this option and will keep you updated on what we learn.

If you have an interest in having rain barrels installed, we are happy to assess the location and total cost to purchase and install one or more for you. If you are interested in a cistern, please let us know and we will research what is needed for your property specifically and the cost for installation. ☀

Eco-Friendly Practices

Eco-friendly practices are doing things that seek to reduce harm or inflict minimal harm on the environment. Here are a few:

1. Mulch grass clippings onto lawn instead of filling landfills w/ them. The mulch breaks down and returns nutrients to soil. Solterra uses mulching blades to accomplish this where appropriate instead of bagging grass clippings.
2. Create a compost pile or bin in your yard for leaf mulch instead of filling landfills. After the leaves break down into compost, it can be recycled into planting beds for nutrients and to improve soil texture. Solterra can help you select a site and start a compost pile.
3. Keep mulch over plant roots. The mulch retains moisture from evaporation, and protects roots from sudden temperature changes. Mulch normally needs to be replenished twice per year.
4. Improve soil. Clay holds water well, but takes a long time to absorb it. By improving soil texture, you allow water and oxygen to penetrate more quickly and deeply, with less run-off. On new installations Solterra Landscapes adds soil amendments, such as mushroom compost and CLM, to improve soil texture and organic matter.
5. Use varieties of plants best suited for our environment. In Atlanta we need to use plants that are both drought tolerant and able to handle large amounts of rainfall. Our climate is cyclical and we will see flooding again. ☀