

The Green Notebook

Here's an idea that I am fascinated with—green roof tops. This idea has been rooted in European nations for awhile. Looks like Chicago has the most green roofs around the U.S. as the concept continues to grow here and abroad. Right here in Central Ohio, green rooftops like the one at North Block at Jeffrey Place, a residential community in downtown Columbus, are sprouting up.

The scoop is this: using a water proof and root-repellant membrane, a drainage system and lightweight vegetation that is easy to maintain, green roof companies can install gardens atop commercial and residential buildings. According to the National Wildlife Federation, studies show that on a summer day, a gravel roof can heat to 140-175 degrees F, but when covered with grass or vegetation, that same roof would be half as hot—a huge savings in cooling and heating the building.

Why else do eco-rooftops make sense? The rainwater which usually gushes through the drainage pipes and right into the sewers and waterways is actually absorbed and filtered by the vegetation, which acts like a sponge, allowing the water to drain slowly. With a rooftop garden, the unutilized space now acts as a green space, adding beauty to an urban area as well as providing living space for wildlife—even endangered species of birds and butterflies usually crowded out by development—a huge bonus for cities nationwide.

Other benefits include improved air quality, noise reduction, reducing the need for re-roofing, creating the opportunity for food production and composting and even recreation—one company has a small golf course on its rooftop!

You can learn more than you even want to know through an organization called Green Roofs for Healthy Cities (the North America chapter). Their website is www.greenroofs.org. You can also scour livingroofs.org or check out books and magazine articles which abound on the topic.

Before you start hauling dirt up to your roof be sure and consult a professional—there some stipulations for successful rooftop planting. Maybe you could start with the dog's house (don't laugh—there are plans for it online!)

Tuesday Trippier lives in Delaware, is a writer and mother of three with a special interest in green living.