

HOME

SANTA FE + NEW MEXICAN



Thanks for visiting Santa Fe New Mexican. If you are 7-day print subscriber, please create an online account and then click 'subscribe' to activate your unlimited access. Otherwise, you're entitled to view 5 free articles every 30 days. Then, if you enjoy our site and want full access, we'll ask you to purchase an affordable subscription.

4

Remaining

Slow it. Flow it. Grow it.

Print Font Size:

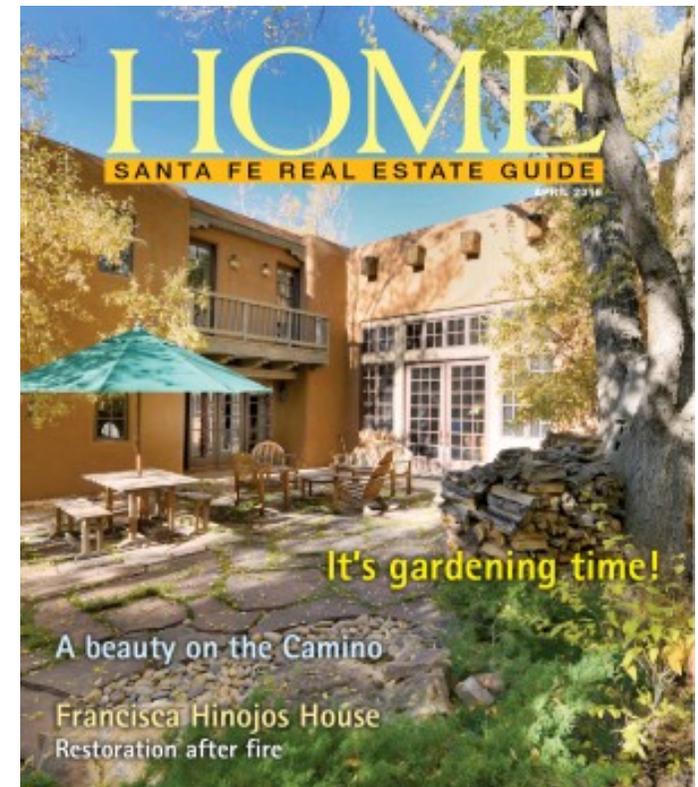
Posted: Sunday, April 3, 2016 6:00 am

Nate Downey/For The New Mexican

Landownership comes with responsibilities. Sometimes it involves a snow shovel. Other times it's weeds. As much as we love them, land titles mean mending walls, raking leaves, and mowing grass. Here in New Mexico, we are lucky not to have to worry much about the latter. Turf installation and maintenance is not only avoided statewide, but it's also often scoffed at on private property. In public parks, plastic playing fields are slowly taking over real-grass ones.

A few years ago, I was visiting with a friend who'd moved to Ohio after a decade in

Home Magazine / Real Estate Guide



Click above to view the latest issue of Home. Or click here to view previous issues.

the City Different. One eerie surprise, he said, “was the incessant sound of lawn mowers.” From dawn until dusk, his suburb pattered, buzzed, and moaned. The idea of quiet was an unattainable dream and, by virtue of its absence, a nightmarish symbol of pollution. In the midst of all the important talk about Flint, Michigan, let’s not forget that runoff from so many chemically treated lawns in the Great Lakes region has produced enormous algal blooms that often poison public and private water systems.

Interestingly, the low maintenance, turf-free properties of Northern New Mexico come with a pollution-creating flipside, too. It’s called soil erosion. In a land of brittle ground, every roof, patio, driveway, and road is a surface that will damage the land if left unmanaged. Without thoughtful implementation of highly localized best management practices, developed real estate creates serious pollution. In a pre-development state, vegetation will absorb a significant quantity of rainwater before generating runoff. In a post-development state, compacted land and impervious surfaces deliver runoff with a significantly larger water volume, an unnaturally high rate of speed, and containing increased levels of particulate. Soon, visible quantities of soil erode, and this causes further scouring downslope. Inevitably, what was called useful soil becomes unwanted sediment in waters that suffer from turbidity, wildlife-habitat destruction, aquifer-infiltration challenges, and other problems.

It’s a viciously viscous cycle of increasingly gunky waters started by gouged-out mesa-tops. At many points along the route followed by our rainwater and stormwater, there are chances to use my three-step motto: Slow it. Flow it. Grow it. First, you slow stormwater down. Next, you flow it toward the roots of plant material. Finally, you grow that water into biomass that retains and builds soil.

The ways to follow this plan are endless. If you’re a self-starter and an effective reader of textbooks, you might want to look into the American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association’s new 300-page textbook, *Rainwater Harvesting Manual*. You’ll find that the first of two chapters by yours truly focuses on the



52 Weeks Free
UNLIMITED DIGITAL ACCESS TO
The Washington Post

with any
Santa Fe New Mexican
print subscription

SUBSCRIBE NOW >>>

SANTA FE 
NEW MEXICAN
santafenewmexican.com



 **SOUTHWEST CARE CENTER**
Health Care Every Person Deserves

Accepting new patients

Family Medicine

Adult & Family Practice Infusion Infectious disease Travel Medicine

1-505-954-1921
1691 Galileo St, Suite D

Specialty Services

Treatment of HIV & Hepatitis C Research Pharmacy Services HIV & Hep C Testing

1-505-989-8200

“slow it, flow it, grow it” theme.

If you’d like instant gratification, feel free to visit www.permadesign.com. There, you can schedule a landscape consultation, watch a how-to video about straw-book swales, or review my recently completed archive of this column.

The stormwater that sweeps through our land can be a blessing. It just depends on whether or not we go beyond snow-shoveling, weeding, and even responsibilities as basic as our bills. We also need to take seriously our responsibility to heal our challenged soils.

Nate Downey, the author of Harvest the Rain, has been a local landscape consultant, designer, and contractor since 1992. He can be reached at 505-690-7939 or via www.permadesign.com.

||||

++

More about **Local**

- **ARTICLE:** How low can we go?
-  040316MerrilycolumnP5
-  040316MerrilycolumnP3
-  040316MerrilycolumnP4

649 Hinkle Road, Suite E For appointment or information on HIV & Hep C testing: 855-287-2569

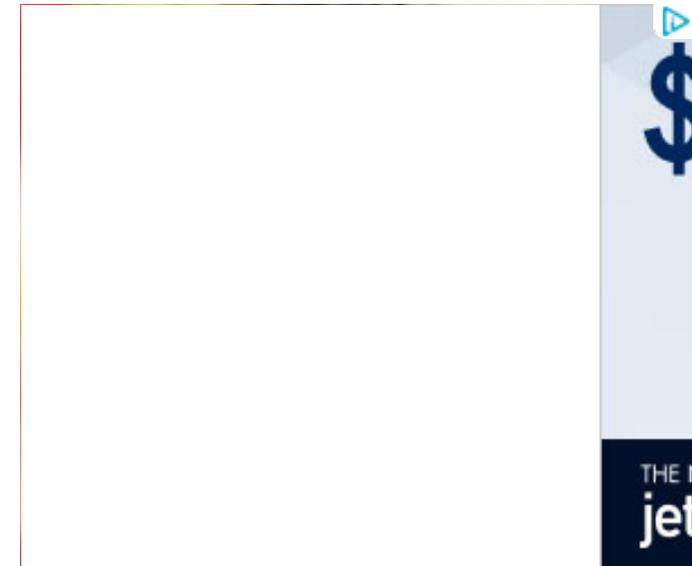
Women's Health Services, Family Practice & Pediatrics

Adult & Family Practice Pediatrics Gynecological Services Reproductive Health

1-505-988-8869
901 West Hamed

www.southwestcare.org

NEWS VIDEO



More videos:





040316MerrilycolumnP1

Discuss

Print

Posted in Home/Real Estate on *Sunday, April 3, 2016 6:00 am.* | Tags: Local

More Stories

How low can we go?
The news, from the same old me
Recent single-family building permits
Gorgeous compound full of artistic history
The 15-year fixed is the winner!

Most Read

Canyon Road hot spot up for sale
Another Arizona firm hired in mental health shake-up to leave state
Jemez Pueblo man gets life sentence for brutal murder
OptumHealth accused of fraud in three lawsuits
Man held in knife attack on S.F. movie set

To our readers, Santafenewmexican.com now uses Facebook to power its comments forum. You will need to login using your Facebook account to post comments to news articles. As always, we do require you to use your real, full name when posting and to be courteous to others when posting.

0 Comments

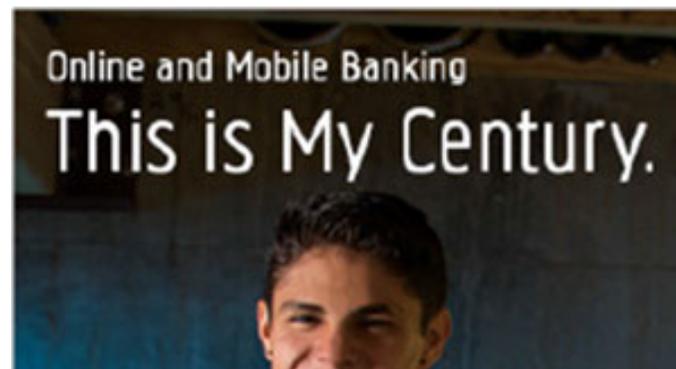


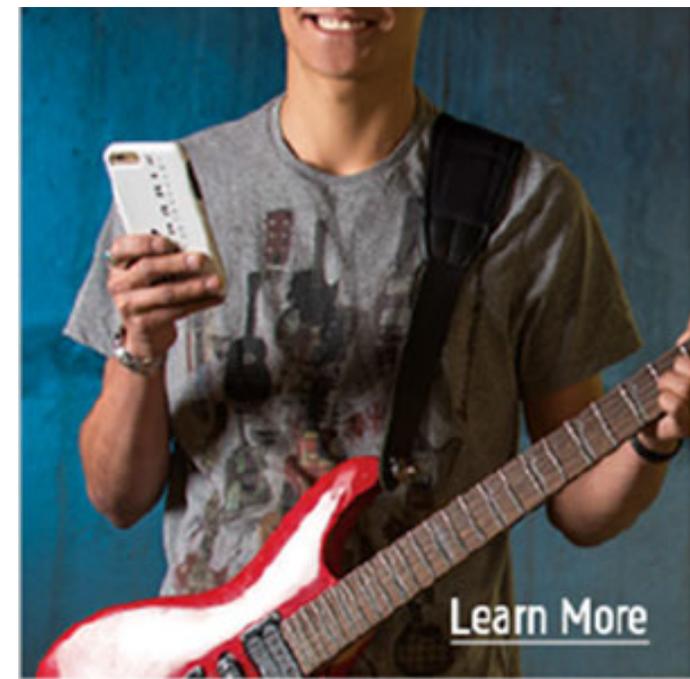
Add a comment...



MOST READ

1. Canyon Road hot spot up for sale
2. Another Arizona firm hired in mental health shake-up to leave state
3. Jemez Pueblo man gets life sentence for brutal murder
4. OptumHealth accused of fraud in three lawsuits
5. Man held in knife attack on S.F. movie set
6. Demonettes dethroned, finishing third at State Spirit despite flawless Saturday routine
7. Many claim they've solved Forrest Fenn riddle, but treasure hunt continues
8. Statin intolerance is real, researchers find
9. Eldorado can raise chickens following appeals court ruling
10. Burglar hits Eldorado gallery





[Learn More](#)

CENTURY BANK
We Bring Local to Life.


EQUAL HOUSING
LENDER

**MEMBER
FDIC**

Sections

- Home
- News
- Sports
- Opinion
- Pasatiempo
- Magazines

Services

- Place Classified Ad
- Subscription Services
- Submission Forms
- Site Index
- Featured Ads
- Featured Ads Reprints

Connections

Phone number: 505-983-3303
E-mail:
webeditor@sfnewmexican.com
Address: 202 E. Marcy St.
 Santa Fe, NM 87501

Search

Search in:

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All | <input type="checkbox"/> Pasatiempo | <input type="checkbox"/> Opinion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> News | <input type="checkbox"/> Magazines | <input type="checkbox"/> Photos |

- Life
- Multimedia
- Weather

- Open House Listings
- Open House Re-Prints
- Add Search Toolbar
- Ad Rates

- Contact us
- The Taos News
- The Sangre de Cristo Chronicle
- Enchanted Homes Real Estate Magazine

© Copyright 2016, The Santa Fe New Mexican, Santa Fe, NM.