

TIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE GARDENING

SUSTAINABILITY CAN BE DEFINED AS “MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE PRESENT WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE ABILITY OF FUTURE GENERATIONS TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.”

A SUSTAINABLE GARDEN IS SELF-FUNCTIONING, RELIES ON MINIMAL ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND CREATES NO ADVERSE EFFECTS ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFIT

- ◆ Trees and other plants help reduce the greenhouse effect and slow global warming
- ◆ Plants soak up carbon dioxide, exhale oxygen and improve water quality by acting as bio filters. Plants also enrich soil by converting nitrogen into nitrates
- ◆ Native trees, shrubs, perennials, etc., support local native wildlife by providing food and fodder
- ◆ Planting more fruits and vegetables provides food security allowing you to eat ‘locally’ and seasonally while decreasing consumption of food that has been transported from across the globe
- ◆ Using non-toxic pest controls aids the environment and is better for human health than herbicides and pesticides. Also reduces amount of toxic runoff into waterways
- ◆ Composting reduces amount of green waste sent to the landfill by turning it into nutritious plant food
- ◆ Install cisterns and rain barrels and use drip irrigation to conserve water

WATER CONSERVATION

- ◆ Reduce or remove your lawn
- ◆ Sheet compost to remove your lawn
- ◆ Let your lawn go brown
- ◆ Harvest water in cisterns or holding tanks
- ◆ Install a green roof on your garage or shed
- ◆ Group plants according to cultural needs reducing water use
- ◆ Pull weeds—they compete with garden plants for water and nutrients
- ◆ Drip irrigation provides slow, controlled applications of water. Soil moisture remains constant and air is always available. There is little loss to evaporation or run-off – the most efficient way to water

- ◆ Watering infrequently and for a longer period of time develops sturdy, well rooted plants—watering frequently and for short periods develops shallow root systems
- ◆ Water roots not foliage. Young plants need watering most and are less likely to survive drought than their well-established counterparts
- ◆ Mulch with organic matter to conserve water
- ◆ Make your own compost and keep a worm bin
- ◆ Use bioswales and rain gardens to control runoff and keep water on site

WILDLIFE GARDENING

- ◆ Mulching boosts insect numbers adding to the food supply for birds and other wildlife. Build a log or branch pile
- ◆ Provide water
- ◆ Plant a hedgerow to provide a food source for wildlife—include native shrubs and small trees
- ◆ Put up birdfeeders and nesting boxes
- ◆ If honey bees are on the decline in your area hang mason bee houses

ROLE OF PLANTS AND SOIL CONDITIONS

- ◆ Rejuvenate existing plants if possible
- ◆ Use compost teas, mulch, organics and compost for soil building
- ◆ Sheet mulch
- ◆ Protect the soil food web
- ◆ Use organic seed
- ◆ Always consider right plant, right place
- ◆ Select plants that are culturally compatible
- ◆ Trade and share plants with friends and neighbors
- ◆ Site deciduous trees to shade the house in summer and reduce cooling costs
- ◆ Create windbreaks to reduce heating costs
- ◆ Grow without herbicides and pesticides—if there is a problem look to Integrated Pest Management practices
- ◆ Learn to live with insects and how to identify beneficials
- ◆ Plant natives and allies
- ◆ Select a variety of plants to attract birds and wildlife
- ◆ Plan for year-round interest: fruit, flower, bark and berry
- ◆ Mix edibles and ornamentals

HARDSCAPE

- ◆ Use organic and sustainable materials
- ◆ Use recycled or re-purposed materials, i.e., concrete, bricks, stone, wood, etc.
- ◆ Incorporate local materials like native stone