



HINTS AND TIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE GARDENING

The idea is to minimize the impact that humans have on the earth. Following sustainable practices at home includes avoiding polluting chemicals, preserving natural resources, and reducing waste whenever possible. You don't have to make huge changes right away if you want to start gardening in a more sustainable way; even something as simple as using natural weed killing methods instead of chemicals can help the environment. These sustainable gardening ideas will help you contribute to a happier, healthier planet.

Go organic - an important part of sustainable gardening. Using fewer chemicals in your garden is more ecologically sound and more cost-effective. Chemicals create massive damage and have harmful consequences. Practice companion planting: French marigolds emit a strong odour which discourages greenfly and blackfly, making them the perfect companion for tomatoes, beans and sweetcorn. Carrots and leeks are also a good pairing: leeks ward off carrot fly while carrots repel leek moth. Use environmentally friendly pest controls...

Mulch Your Landscape. A great way to prevent weeds from springing up in your garden, but it also helps hold moisture in the soil. In areas with watering restrictions, this is especially important. Add a 5-10cm layer of the mulch of your choice to your garden beds...

Plant Natives. These plants take less work, usually require less water, and thrive better than other perennials because they are already suited to our climate, rainfall, and soil types. Native wildflowers are easy to grow and maintain and are often more resistant to pests than non-natives. They are ideal for attracting bees and butterflies, which need all the help they can get with numbers declining across the country...

Lose Your Lawn (Or Part of It). A gorgeous, green, and weed-free lawn uses a lot of resources. Water and fertilizer are needed to keep most lawns looking in top shape. Leave an area of grass unmown to provide a habitat for local wildlife. Mow with a manual or electric mower, petrol mowers pollute the air....

Water Less Try to collect as much rainwater and grey water as you can. A few easy ways to save and reuse water are buckets in the shower; rainwater barrels; permeable surfaces like mulch. Don't water your lawn-it will recover from drought...

Grow Your Own Food. Raising some of your own food is an essential part of a sustainable lifestyle. Even a few pots of salad leaves or carrots, French beans or kale reduces reliance on supermarkets and the taste is so much better...

Save Seeds. When annual flowers or veg go to seed at the end of the season, collect the seed and store in a dry place all winter. You can sow the seeds in your garden next spring — no need to pay for additional seeds! Try this with marigold, sunflower, morning glory, nicotiana, cosmos, sweet peas, runner and French beans...

Start composting and recycle ALL your kitchen scraps and green garden 'waste' to make a free soil enricher and create less waste. If you buy compost, make sure it is peat-free.



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Other tips:

Don't buy plastic plant pots; choose biodegradable or recyclable alternatives instead or make your own – use take-away coffee cups, yoghurts pots, cardboard rolls for seed planting.

Re-use any plastic pots and trays you have for as long as possible.

Buy tools, plant labels and string that are made from natural materials. Use wool or jute twine rather than plastic for plant ties or stretched strips of old T-shirts. Wooden ice cream spoons and lolly sticks for plant labels.

Turn fallen leaves into leaf mould for a natural mulch.

Make your own plant feed using natural materials.

Consider buying garden tools, equipment and furniture second-hand. Try eBay, Freecycle, Gumtree and charity shops.

Introduce trees and hedges to your garden to help air quality. Trees are excellent carbon sinks and hedges offer wildlife habitats and counter air pollution.

Encourage insects that feed on pests (such as greenfly) by providing them with a natural habitat.

Provide a food and water source for wild birds – they'll eat any pests.

Add bat boxes and bug hotels to the garden, plus twigs and leaves in piles at the backs of borders.