

Tips for Environmentally Friendly Gardening
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SOIL

This is truly the “foundation” of a healthy garden. PH and nutrient tests can tell you what your soil needs for proper balance and specific minerals. Balanced soil (6.5-7.0 Ph) is necessary for plants to absorb nutrients through their roots. Adding compost is the best way to ensure healthier plants, better veggies and prettier flowers. Two inches of compost tilled 4-6 inches deep is a basic formula. Make your own free compost (and reduce landfill waste) with your own compost bin. Happy soil should look like chocolate cake. Healthy soil makes healthy plants, which are more resistant to pests and disease while holding more nutrients and water.

WATER

This fast disappearing resource needs to be conserved and protected, but we don't have to let our gardens go thirsty. Water deeply at plant roots, 1 inch a week to encourage a deep root system. Sprinklers lose 95% of water to evaporation. Consider drip irrigation hoses in your gardens. Collect free water from your roof with a rain barrel. Reduce water dependent lawns by planting native shrubs, grasses, and plants or create a wildflower meadow.

PLANTS

Try native varieties which are adapted to our climate and are more resistant to pests, disease, and drought. There are many trees, shrubs, and flowers that are beautiful as well as low maintenance! Welcome birds and butterflies to your yard by choosing plants that feed and house them. They will in turn help you with pest control and enhance your garden with their song and beauty.

FERTILIZERS AND PESTICIDES

If you have healthy soil and grow native, disease resistant plants you can greatly reduce the need for fertilizers. By reducing the use of harmful chemicals, you are helping the environment in many ways. There will be more birds, bees, butterflies and beneficial insects to enhance your gardens and help with insect control. You will also reduce the nitrogen runoff from the soil into our drinking water and waterways, keeping both healthy for future generations. There are many effective nontoxic products available these days.