

What is 'Sustainable Gardening'?

"Gardening in a way that conserves natural resources, uses a minimum of toxic chemicals, and encourages a diversity of plant and animal life is sustainable gardening."

The dictionary defines sustainable as "a method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged." Others sources define it as "able to sustain itself." Every website seems to have a different definition but, Garden Rant, a blog that has a lot of great information, provided this one.

One example of using and conserving nature resources would be a big shade tree in the front yard that helps keep the house cool in the summer and, because it's deciduous (sheds its leaves annually) it allows the sun to shine in and warm the house in the winter. A couple other examples would be a lawn that helps cool the yard during the summer months, a vegetable garden that provides food, and flowers that beautify a yard bring joy — all produce oxygen.

Help in developing and maintaining your sustainable garden:

- Choose native plants or plants from a similar climate zone.
- Use manual or electric tools instead of gas powered tools that contribute to air pollution.
- For insect control, use organic spray. Here's a simple recipe:
 - 3 tbs Baking soda
 - 2 tbs Baby shampoo
 - 2 tbs Canola Oil
 - 2 tbs VinegarPut in Ortho Dial & Spray (setting 2 oz). Add water. Attach to hose and spray.
- Monitor the water system so that water is not being wasted. MP rotator nozzles that retrofit onto existing water systems are setting new standards for water efficiency for both turf and landscaping.
- Mulch all exposed soil to help with water conservation and weed control.
- Compost your yard waste and kitchen scraps so that you are adding nutrients back into the soil. If you are composting kitchen scraps make sure that you keep them in a compost bin so that you don't have raccoons and other four legged visitors dining in your compost pile.
- Rain water collection: there are many new systems on the market for both above ground and below ground installation. With water being a limited resource, this is something that we all should evaluate for our gardens.
- Weed regularly so that the weeds aren't competing for water
- Group plants with similar water needs
- For your lawn: set the blades of your mower at 3" as this encourages deeper roots and improves drought tolerance.
- Plant things that you like and that are not too much to care for so that you'll keep on gardening

While all these things sound similar to Organic gardening, sustainable gardening isn't necessarily organic. For example: a rice grower in the desert could be a certified organic farmer but not using sustainable practices because in the desert water is not a sustainable resource.

While it probably isn't realistic to think that we can have gardens that truly sustain themselves, we can set it as a goal and save ourselves money, time and resources while enjoying our gardens.

Article by the staff at Garden Accents. Organic Spray provided by Sheri Sinni. Visit their beautiful facility located at 11155 Lena Avenue. They have everything you'll need to start and maintain your vegetable garden.