

Sustainable Gardens



A garden that is sustainable and productive not only gives you food, it saves you money.

Sustainable gardening enables you to maintain a healthy productive garden, reuse organic waste and create your own fertilizer. It's a cost effective, environmentally friendly way to provide food, minimise waste and is a great learning experience for children.



Productive Gardens

If you have space for a garden why not make it a productive one? You can set up vegetable patches, herb gardens and plant fruit trees as easily as other plants, and you get to eat them later!

There is a large variety of options for vegetable planting ranging from pre-made raised beds that you can buy and then prepare and plant through to the DIY ones built from recycled materials hanging around the yard. You can even get miniature fruit trees and put them in pots (makes it easier to reach the fruit). Herbs are also great in pots and can be moved around as required or taken with you if you move.

Watering

The most efficient way to water your plants is through drip irrigation, this releases the water slowly and efficiently at the base of the plant. Perforated or porous hoses allow water to be applied slowly and can be used under mulch to reduce evaporation. When watering by hand use a trigger nozzle as this helps to control water flow. Direct water to the plants root zone to avoid evaporation.

If you can, check the soil moisture before watering and only water when you need to. Grey and rain water can be used in the garden at any time but again, only water when necessary. If using grey water, try to rotate the areas and if plants start to look unhealthy stop using it. See our Grey water tip sheet for more information at www.greenmoves.com.au/freeinfo

There is also a range of water saving products available to help improve the water holding capacity of the soil. Re-wetting agents break down the waxy coating that soil and mulch develop if allowed to dry out. There are also crystals and other products that can help available at garden centres and some hardware stores.

Mulching

Mulching can reduce the need for watering by up to 70%. Apply the mulching material to a minimum depth of 10cm. This will minimise the loss of moisture and help maintain soil temperature. It also helps plant growth, suppresses weeds and reduces water run-off.

Many organic types of mulch add nutrients to the soil as they break down. This improves the soil structure and encourages the presence of worms and other

organisms. Examples are pea straw, lucerne hay, wood chips, leaf litter, chipped tree pruning's, compost and old manure. In-organic mulches (eg: pebbles and gravel) give no benefit to the soil and may have a negative effect on soil health, so are best kept to a minimum. Organic mulch is much better for your garden.

Weed mats

Biodegradable weed mats suppress weed growth and eventually break down. They are great for suppressing weeds when establishing new plants. Avoid plastic weed mats as they prevent moisture and air from entering soil and add to plastic waste.

Composting and Worm Farms

Food and garden waste accounts for almost 50% of landfill rubbish. By using a Compost heap and/or a worm farm you not only reduce the waste going to landfill, you create the opportunity to fertilize your garden for free. Compost bins or heaps and worm farms are the most sustainable way to treat and re-use your organic waste for the greater benefit of your garden. Local councils often run workshops and information sessions on composting and worm farms and the internet has a huge amount of useful information on setting up and managing them.

Diggers Garden Club

A great range of heirloom vegetable seeds and plants at www.diggers.com.au

Permaculture Blitz

This is a group based in Melbourne run by volunteers who do a backyard blitz to help people set up a garden based on sustainability and permaculture principles. See www.permablitz.net for more information or to get involved.

Sustainable Gardening Association

This association is a great source of information to help you create and maintain your own sustainable garden. Their website is www.sgaonline.org.au so take a look when you have a few minutes. They also have a Sustainable Gardens Open Day on August 21st 2011 in Victoria. See their website for more information.



For any queries or additional information on this tip sheet please contact Green Moves Australia on (03) 9024 5515 or 1300 898 742

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