

KPOV – *The Point*

Gardening: Get Good at It

“Becoming a Sustainable Gardener”

May 3, 2022

Never has it been so important to be a sustainable gardener. Climate change is happening and the forecast doesn't look particularly good. I've asked myself, "what can I do to become a sustainable gardener?"

For me, the term 'sustainable gardener' means being environmentally conscious. Whether you have a massive landscape, a vegetable garden or even a container garden, it needs to be in balance. This means in balance with our local climate by requiring minimal resource inputs, such as fertilizer, pesticides, time and water.

It may sound daunting but a short-term goal might include saving precious water with a drip system or installing and using a compost bin. I save my fruit and vegetable scraps in a covered pail. When it's full, I bury them in a pre-dug trench right into my vegetable garden.

Long-term goals might include looking at all aspects of total plant health care; appropriate plant selection for our climate, maintainability and reduction of inputs.

Another long-term goal is to plant diversity in your yard or vegetable garden. A diverse plant population often encourages beneficial organism populations. This includes birds, insects and microorganisms. Multiple plantings of a single species are less sustainable. I interplant herbs throughout my vegetable garden because many bloom early and attract beneficials. Some make good companion plants such as basil and tomatoes. Others have a strong fragrance which seems to deter unwanted pests.

Most pest problems directly correspond with the health and condition of the plant. Stressed and weakened plants are more susceptible to disease and insect problems. Good plant health will prevent most pest problems.

If a pest problem develops, a correct diagnosis is important. Different plant problems have various solutions. Contact our local Extension Office at 541-548-6088 for a research-based diagnosis and treatment.

Most of us have a preexisting space in which to practice sustainable gardening and make a difference in our environment. I do have a few additional practices to help you get started.

Take Stock - Your yard probably already has a lot to like, so build on what you like and tackle what you don't like. Observe which plants thrive in your yard and which seem to require too much time and attention.

Have a Plan - Decide how you want to live in your yard. How much time do you want to spend on your yard? Your plan could be as simple as having a few goals to achieve more sustainability.

Start Small - By starting small you can pace yourself and learn from your successes and even your failures.

Go Native - Native plants are uniquely suited for conditions in our region and when planted in the right spot, require minimal care once established. This reduces the amount of water, fertilizers, and time required to care for them.

Reduce Grass Area - Grass offers a few environmental advantages for local wildlife but does require considerable time, water, chemicals, and energy to maintain. So, consider what purpose the lawn plays and resize it to meet sustainable needs.

In review:

The focus of the four main principles of sustainable landscapes are:

- 1) To enhance landscape microclimates
- 2) To increase biodiversity
- 3) To reduce resource inputs and resource waste and
- 4) To maximize reuse of resources.

While growing and maintaining a garden are inherently “green” activities, sustainable gardening is about growing a greener future.

For answers to all your gardening questions, please visit our website: www.gocomga.com and click on the KPOV tab on the orange bar. This has been Gardening: Get Good at It on KPOV’s The Point.

Resources:

<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/yard-garden/sustainable-landscaping-7-243/>

<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/what-organic-or-sustainable-vegetable-gardening>

<https://today.oregonstate.edu/news/save-money-and-help-planet-sustainable-garden-practices>