

#bepesticidefree

10 tips for a healthy garden

1. Soil

To have a good garden, one must have good topsoil. Most urban lots only have a thin layer of topsoil over compacted clay. If you want a good garden make sure you have a thick layer of topsoil. Good soil will also contain a community of beneficial organisms, such as soil microbes, insects and earthworms.

2. Feed the Soil

Fertilize the soil and feed the microbes by mixing in 2-4 cm of compost or aged manure in the spring and/or by tilling in plant remains in the fall. Start a home composting program.

3. Plant Selection

Choose suitable species for your growing conditions. Choose varieties that are resistant to diseases and pests, and suited to your region. Buy nursery stock and transplants from reputable, local sources and pay attention to their needs for light (sun or shade), wind protection, soil texture, fertility, and moisture.

4. Plant Placement

In the vegetable garden or annual flower bed, plant crops in different places from year to year. This technique, called crop rotation, breaks plant disease cycles and changes the nutrients taken from each part of the garden.

5. Companion Planting

Planting two different but complementary species together helps repel pests and improve soil fertility. Check out the classic books on this topic [Carrots Love Tomatoes](#) or [Roses love Garlic](#) both by Louise Roitte. Another good book is [Great Garden Companions](#) by Sally Jean Cunningham.

6. Plant for Biodiversity

Increase the number of different kinds of plants in your yard. Try planting some native plants that will attract beneficial insects. Check with experts at local garden centres for advice on what native plants to plant. Check out the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan website:

<http://www.npss.sk.ca/>



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May 2011

7. Monitor

Examine your plants regularly for pests and diseases. Major outbreaks are less likely to occur when the problem is discovered while still small and localized.

8. Water

Water the soil instead of the leaves. In our area flowers and vegetables need about 5 cm of water per week. A couple of good soakings each week are better than several light sprinkles.

9. Weeding

Organic gardeners use three main techniques to keep weeds under control:

Cultivation: Turning over the soil in spring and fall will help control weeds. You also need a good hoe. The idea of hoeing is to cut the weeds off just at or below the soil surface. This can easily be done with a light sweeping motion when the weeds are small. Do it regularly to keep the row spaces clean. Weeds may be left on the soil surface or removed for composting. (Weeds with mature seeds need to be put through a hot compost pile to kill the seeds.)



Canopy Shading: intensively planted beds can be planned so that the developing plants shade out weeds. Some weeding is usually done when the crop plants are small.

Mulching: Mulch is any kind of material that covers the soil. It can be leaves, grass clippings (if they are herbicide free) or wood chips. An 8 cm depth is needed. Plastic mulches are also available. They all help reduce weeds and conserve water.

10. Enjoy

Enjoy the fruits of your labour because we are sure they are delicious.



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To learn more about alternatives to using pesticides, please see:

Website: www.organicgardening.com

Book: Rodale's All New Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening: The Indispensable Resource for Every Gardener by Fern Marshall Bradley and Barbara W. Ellis

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