



Top 5 Gardening Tips for a Healthy Lawn and Garden

Following these practices will:

- Save money on your water bill
- Save time
- Protect the health of people, pets, wildlife and the environment

1. Build Healthy Soil.

Build healthier soil by using compost and by adding mulch. The best time to add compost and mulch is in the spring. Compost has the nutrients your plants need, therefore, eliminating the need for fertilizers. Compost and mulch also hold and retain water so you don't have to water as much. Adding mulch also inhibits weed seeds from growing. Mix 1-3 inches of compost with your soil when making new planting beds or lawns. Compost also improves all types of soil.

2. Plant right for your site.

Find out what plants grow well in the Northwest. At www.plantnative.com/index.htm you will be able to query and find native plants for Western Washington. You will need to know if the site where you want to plant is dry or wet, sunny or shady. By picking native plants for your garden, you are providing food, shelter and cover for the wildlife in your neighborhood. You can also pick plants that are "drought tolerant". You might need to water these well the first year but after they are established they will require less water.

3. Practice Smart Water Techniques.

Use soaker hoses when watering in planting beds. This can reduce by 50% the water you would use if you used a sprinkler or watered by hand. Water in the early morning or evening.

4. Think twice before using pesticides and fertilizers.

Choose "natural organic" or "slow release" fertilizers over "weed and feed." These fertilizers release the nutrients slowly and less is wasted. Apply "slow release" fertilizer in May and September. Apply fertilizers and pesticides only where you intend it to be applied. Don't let the fertilizer pellets get onto sidewalks or the street. Rainwater can carry pesticides and fertilizers off our lawns into storm drains, and then into streams or lakes. Many pesticides may harm fish even in very small amounts.

5. Mow high and mow often.

Use the mulch option on your lawn mower. Leaving grass clippings on the lawn provides free fertilizer. This helps lawns grow greener and denser.