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## **Sustainable Gardening**

Getting started with sustainable gardening is a rewarding way to grow your own food, beautify your surroundings, and support the environment. Here are practical steps to create a garden that thrives while conserving resources:

### **1. Choose the Right Location**

- **Select a sunny spot:** Most plants need 6–8 hours of sunlight daily.
- **Consider water access:** Place your garden near a water source for easy irrigation.
- **Plan for drainage:** Ensure the soil drains well and doesn't become waterlogged.

### **2. Start Small**

- **Begin with manageable space:** A small garden or a few container plants is easier to maintain.
- **Focus on essentials:** Grow plants you love to eat or use, such as herbs, vegetables, or flowers.

### **3. Test and Improve the Soil**

- **Test soil quality:** Use a soil test kit to check pH and nutrient levels.
- **Add organic matter:** Improve soil health by mixing compost, aged manure, or mulch.
- **Avoid chemical fertilizers:** Use natural amendments like bone meal, fish emulsion, or rock phosphate.

### **4. Use Native and Adapted Plants**

- **Choose native species:** These plants are better suited to local conditions, require less maintenance, and support local wildlife.
- **Grow drought-tolerant plants:** If water conservation is a concern, opt for plants that thrive in dry conditions.

### **5. Practice Composting**

- **Set up a compost bin:** Collect kitchen scraps, yard waste, and other organic materials.
- **Use compost as fertilizer:** Enrich your soil with nutrient-rich compost to reduce reliance on synthetic fertilizers.

### **6. Water Wisely**

- **Water early or late:** Minimize evaporation by watering in the early morning or late afternoon.

- **Use drip irrigation:** Install a drip system to deliver water directly to the roots of your plants.
- **Collect rainwater:** Set up a rain barrel to store water for irrigation.

## 7. Implement Companion Planting

- **Pair plants strategically:** Plant species that benefit each other, like marigolds to deter pests or basil near tomatoes.
- **Attract beneficial insects:** Grow flowers like lavender or daisies to attract pollinators and predators of harmful pests.

## 8. Avoid Harmful Chemicals

- **Use natural pest control:** Try neem oil, insecticidal soap, or diatomaceous earth to manage pests.
- **Promote biodiversity:** Encourage birds, ladybugs, and other natural predators to keep pests in check.

## 9. Mulch for Moisture and Weed Control

- **Spread organic mulch:** Use materials like straw, wood chips, or shredded leaves to retain moisture, regulate soil temperature, and reduce weeds.

## 10. Rotate Crops

- **Prevent soil depletion:** Rotate plants each season to avoid nutrient depletion and reduce the risk of pests and diseases.

## 11. Grow Your Own Seeds

- **Harvest seeds:** Collect seeds from your plants to reduce the need for buying new ones.
- **Choose heirloom varieties:** Grow non-GMO, open-pollinated seeds for greater biodiversity.

## 12. Support Pollinators

- **Plant pollinator-friendly flowers:** Include species like sunflowers, coneflowers, or milkweed.
- **Provide water sources:** Offer shallow water dishes for bees and butterflies.
- **Avoid pesticides:** Protect pollinators by eliminating chemical sprays.

## 13. Reduce Garden Waste

- **Repurpose yard waste:** Use grass clippings, leaves, and trimmings as mulch or compost.
- **Recycle materials:** Create trellises or garden borders using old wood or other recycled materials.

## 14. Create Wildlife Habitat

- **Add birdhouses or bee hotels:** Support wildlife by offering shelter for beneficial creatures.
- **Plant hedges or shrubs:** Provide nesting spaces and food sources for birds and insects.

## 15. Educate Yourself

- **Research gardening techniques:** Read books or attend workshops on sustainable gardening.
- **Join local groups:** Connect with gardening communities for shared tips and experiences.

### Benefits of Sustainable Gardening

- **Environmentally Friendly:** Reduces waste, conserves water, and minimizes chemical use.
- **Healthier Produce:** Homegrown fruits and vegetables are fresher and free of harmful chemicals.
- **Cost-Effective:** Reduces grocery bills and reliance on commercial products.