Tips for a greener thumb

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GREEN IDEAS:
4 TIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE GARDENING
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May is Gardening for Wildlife Month! Join the movement and support Oregon’s fundamental biodiversity by providing local critters with food and shelter in your backyard. Here are a few suggestions to help you create a welcoming wildlife garden using plants native to the Pacific Northwest.

The Oregon white oak is the only oak tree indigenous to Washington and British Columbia. The sweet acorns that this dense, rounded tree produces are like candy for wildlife—and you can eat them too! If you’re looking for something extra-tall, consider the majestic Douglas fir: grouse, deer and elk adore its leaves, while birds of all kinds like to snack on its seeds. A smaller option is the Western serviceberry, whose deep purple fruit attracts songbirds, squirrels and deer, among other woodland dwellers.

Salmonberry, also known as salmon raspberry, is great for both attracting wildlife and adding color to your landscaping. Its bright pink flowers and yellowish fruit are prized by a number of bird species—the Swainson’s thrush is even nicknamed “salmonberry bird” because of its fondness for the shrub. Another visually stunning berry bush is the blue elderberry, whose white flowers and pale blue fruit are especially enticing to valuable pollinators like butterflies and hummingbirds.

Oregon’s state flower, the Oregon-grape, also attracts an assortment of birds with its bright yellow blooms and bluish black berries. What’s more, it’s able to withstand less-than-ideal soil conditions as well as extended periods of drought. Building a wildlife garden to showcase the diverse flora indigenous to your region helps support the delicate balance local ecosystems need to survive. In addition to being an environmentally sound practice, gardening with native plants is much easier than with foreign species.

How to beautify your fence

In addition to offering privacy and making your yard safer for children and pets, a fence has the potential to beautify your outdoor living space. Here are a few ideas to inspire you.

If you opt for a wooden fence, consider painting it to match your deck or patio. This fencing material can be stained or painted a new color at any time, which makes it easy to freshen up the look of your backyard.

A vinyl fence is able to resist the elements, but it can lack character. To amp up its appeal, decorate your fence with flowering vines or hang planters and fairy lights from it.

If you want a stylish fence that’s easy to maintain, choose one made of high density polyethylene in your preferred color. This type of fencing is also an ideal option if you want to section off your pool or garden.

Complement the clean lines of your iron or aluminum fence by suspending potted flower arrangements at regular intervals. To further elevate the look of a metal fence, consider adorning the posts with decorative caps.

For advice on the ideal fence to suit your yard and budget, reach out to a local fencing contractor.
How to spruce up your front entrance

Your front entrance can have a significant impact on the curb appeal of your home. Here are some tips to enhance this part of your property and make it look more inviting.

An emphasis on greenery. Frame your front door by placing potted plants or flower arrangements on either side of the entrance. This will create symmetry and add a pop of color. Just be sure the plants don’t block the doors or stairs and that their size makes sense for the space.

To create a cohesive look, make sure the plants around your front entrance complement the rest of the landscaping. Choose species that also grow in your front garden or line the walkway. Alternatively, opt for flowers that match your yard’s color scheme.

In addition, consider the pots. You may want to select ones that resemble the shade or texture of your paving stones.

A welcoming walkway. If you have a walkway, it’s a good idea to embellish it with a bit of vegetation. For a curved walkway, or one with a sharp turn, it’s a good idea to create a focal point where it’s most angled. This might consist of a well-tended rosebush, a small weeping tree or a vibrant flowering perennial. Check to see how your choice of plant looks at various angles, including from the street, the driveway and the front door, before you dig into the ground.

For more advice about how to enhance your front entrance, consult a landscaper or an expert at your local garden center.

4 ways kids can help in the garden

If you’re a parent, you might find it difficult to tend to your garden while also keeping a close eye on your kids. Fortunately, there are a number of simple tasks that can keep even the youngest gardeners occupied.

1. Watering. Fill up a watering can — make sure it’s not too heavy — and let your little ones go about hydrating your planter boxes and potted plants. When it comes time to water the vegetable garden or flower beds, offer to let your kids hold the hose.

2. Weeding. Teach your children to recognize the most common unwanted plants that sprout up in your garden. Ask them to go on a hunt for weeds and, with your supervision, let them try pulling up ones with shallow roots.

3. Mulching. You can add mulch to your garden to help it retain moisture and limit the spread of weeds. Encourage your kids to get their hands dirty by carefully transferring mulch from the bag to the garden and spreading it evenly over the soil.

4. Tidying. From picking up leaves to putting twigs in the compost bin, there are plenty of easy ways your kids can help clean the yard. Remind them to keep an eye out for fallen petals, pinecones and acorns they can use for crafts.

In addition to giving you a hand, your little ones will have plenty of opportunities to learn about how plants grow. It’s a win-win situation.
Garden walls

Whether they are made of fieldstone, brick, or concrete, walls play an important role in landscaping. That is even truer if your terrain includes slopes. A garden wall is a good project if you want to set off flowerbeds to advantage and create contrasts with vegetation.

For maximum effect, you’ll want the wall to blend in with the style of your home and its immediate surroundings. For example, if you live in a rustic old house, avoid using concrete. Conversely, if you have just bought a newly built home, weathered stone is not the ideal product.

If you decide to build a stone wall, use stones that come from your area, as they will look more natural in your yard. Using stones has an advantage — certain types of plants can be easily grown in all the crevices. However, building this type of wall is not always easy. It will require a great deal of patience, and the work has to be done meticulously in order for the wall to be sturdy.

There is also a wide range of reconstituted bricks on the market. This material is easy to build a wall with and gives a more modern look to a yard. Even if bricks are no longer as popular as they were in the past, they do have certain advantages: they are inexpensive and easy to install.

Many people assume that concrete is not a material one would want to see in a backyard. However, it is an interesting and adaptable choice worth considering, as it can be poured in a wide variety of shapes and dimensions. Why not ask a landscaper to help you design a concrete wall that suits your home and yard?

Adding a pond to your property is an excellent way to embellish your outdoor space and give it personality. To incorporate a pond that harmonizes with the rest of your landscaping, keep these tips in mind.

Determine the ideal spot for your pond. First of all, you’ll need to consider sunlight, because your water feature might house various living species (plants, fish, frogs, etc.) with different needs. Make sure that your pond will receive enough sunlight for flora and fauna to thrive. Furthermore, avoid placing your pond next to a tree, because its roots may eventually damage it.

After finding the perfect spot for your water feature, you’ll need to determine its size and shape. To choose the appropriate size, consider how big your yard is. If it’s relatively small, a giant pond would only make it feel more cramped. The opposite is also true: a tiny pond might go unnoticed in a sprawling yard. Remember that your pond will receive enough sunlight for flora and fauna to thrive. Furthermore, you’ll need to consider your home’s style and landscape.

Once you’ve set up your pond, you’ll be able to highlight it with plants, a sculpture, solar-powered lanterns, a rustic bench, or any other accessories you’d like.

The timeless elegance of natural stone

Natural stone is always a great choice when choosing a material for use in a landscaping project. Stylish and durable, natural stone helps to create a beautiful feeling of harmony between the vegetation and your home. In fact, it’s a fabulous option to consider for most of your outdoor projects.

In the backyard, the trend of building natural stone walls is still in favor. These stones are used to create plant beds and retaining walls that keep the earth in place, but they’re also used to add another dimension to the landscaping. Walls provide privacy or can be used as aesthetic structures to define spaces. In addition to ornamental or retaining walls, natural stones are perfect for creating paths with a country or modern look, depending on the style you’re looking for.

Silica, sandstone, limestone and slate are some examples of natural stone that fit perfectly into landscaped yards, whether it’s in the city, suburbs or countryside. Natural stone can brighten the feel of an entire backyard when used for an outdoor fireplace, a decorative feature, steps, patio or waterfall. Whatever your project, you can count on the expertise of landscapers to help you find the right natural stone products, including the shapes and colors that will enhance the vegetation in your yard. Find inspiration from their project catalogues or browse the web to discover a unique landscaping plan that tickles your fancy.
4 landscaping tips for a beautiful yard

Planting flowers and shrubs can create a more lovely and inviting yard. Here are four tips to help you beautify your garden and lawn.

1. Consider flowering times. Choose plants that bloom at different times between late spring and early fall. This way you’ll have flowers to enjoy all summer long.

2. Pay attention to soil type. When selecting plants, opt for species that grow well in the type of soil on your property. This will help your garden flourish and make it easier to maintain.

3. Think about the sun. While some plants thrive in direct sunlight, others prefer shade. Select vegetation based on the amount of light your yard gets.

4. Factor in yard work. All lawns and gardens require some upkeep, but certain trees, bushes and flowers need more care than others. Make sure to choose plants based on the amount of time you have to weed, prune, water and rake.

Finally, if you want to add planters or build a deck, find out what maintenance is required. Ask about weather-resistant options at your local hardware store.

4 ways to make the most of a small yard

If you have a small yard, landscaping can be a challenge. Here are four tips to help you maximize your space and create an outdoor oasis.

1. Furnish wisely. Multifunctional pieces are ideal for small areas. For example, a sturdy deck box can be used as both storage and seating. Modular furniture is another option, as it can easily be rearranged and adapted to suit awkward spaces.

2. Design vertically. Growing vines up a wall, fence or trellis is a great way to add greenery to your yard without using up a lot of floor space. You can also hang planters, string fairy lights, install a tree swing and store garden tools on hooks along the fence.

3. Use corners. Nooks and crannies have a lot of potential, so use them wisely. Increase your seating with a wooden corner bench or take advantage of an unusual angle to highlight a decorative piece such as a sculpture, shrub or fountain.

4. Create depth. If you have a narrow yard, opt for long, thin pavers rather than square ones to draw your eye toward the back of the yard. Alternatively, create a winding path to make the space appear wider. Place plants with small, dark foliage at the rear of your garden, and choose red, orange and yellow flowers with big, bold leaves for the front.

Find everything you need to make the most of a small yard at your local garden center and hardware store.

3 native evergreen shrubs to grow in the Pacific Northwest

Do you want to adorn your yard with plants indigenous to your area? If so, you’re not alone. Landscaping with native plants is on the rise among eco-conscious gardeners. Here are three evergreen shrubs that feel right at home in the Pacific Northwest.

1. Evergreen Huckleberry. Also called California huckleberry, this shrub has small dark green leaves that develop a bronze tinge in winter. By late summer, its delicate pinkish-white bell flowers give way to succulent black berries that can be used to make jams and jellies.

2. Oregon Grape. With leaves reminiscent of holly and tiny yellow flowers that bloom in spring, this evergreen shrub will add interest to your yard year-round. While not part of the grape family, it does produce similar-looking purple-blue berries that are edible but quite tart.

3. Pacific Wax Myrtle. This dense evergreen can be used as a natural windbreak or privacy screen, and its tolerance to salt spray makes it a good fit for coastal areas. The shrub’s glossy green leaves are pleasantly aromatic, and it produces bumpy purple berries in the fall.

Finally, if you want to add planters or build a deck, find out what maintenance is required. Ask about weather-resistant options at your local hardware store.
3 reasons to hire a professional landscaper

Do you want to turn your yard into a personal oasis? How about boost the curb appeal and market value of your home? Landscaping can do all this, but unless you have ample time, stamina and expertise, it’s probably best to hire a professional landscaper to do the job. Here’s what you can expect.

I. Great ideas. A beautifully designed yard begins with a well thought out plan. Landscapers, also called landscape designers, can help you create a great design from scratch or embellish on ideas you already have. They’ll evaluate your property and use their in-depth knowledge of terrain and design principles to make recommendations specific to your yard. They’ll work with you to form a plan that suits your vision and budget.

II. Horticultural expertise. Landscapers are deeply versed in horticulture. They have extensive knowledge of plant life and understand how terrain and climate impact vegetation. You can therefore count on them to know which plants, flowers, trees and shrubs will thrive in your yard and what each one will require in terms of soil, sunlight, water and general care.

III. Superior execution. An experienced landscaper will have successfully completed a large number of projects and you can be confident that they’ll achieve good results with your yard too. They’ll bring industry expertise to the job and know where to find the best talent and resources. Plus, they’re familiar with the different problems that can occur and the pitfalls that should be avoided.

If you’d like to hire a landscaper, look for one who’s experienced, certified and has liability insurance. Get ready to love your yard like never before!

4 simple upgrades for a healthier home

Your home may be full of hidden chemicals, allergens, mold, bacteria and viruses. Luckily, there are things you can do to eradicate these harmful pathogens. Here are four simple upgrades for a healthier home.

I. Install a central vacuum. A built-in central vacuum is more powerful and effective than a portable vacuum. This appliance captures and removes dust mites and allergens, resulting in better air quality and fewer allergy symptoms.

II. Add touchless faucets. Swap your standard kitchen and bathroom faucets for motion or voice-activated models. They’re easy to install and can help stop the spread of germs.

III. Choose antimicrobial surfaces. Stainless steel and copper surfaces are naturally antimicrobial. Consider adding these materials to your kitchen sink, countertops and cabinet hardware. If you don’t like the look of stainless steel, opt for engineered surfaces like quartz, which are less susceptible to pathogens than stone and other porous materials.

IV. Change your flooring. Choose low-VOC (volatile organic compound) vinyl flooring or non-toxic laminate flooring for your bedroom, kitchen and bathroom floors. VOCs are toxic chemicals that are released from various industrial products. These chemicals can irritate your respiratory tract, damage your nervous system and may cause cancer in humans and animals.

These conversions can go a long way to making you, your family and your home healthier. For help with these upgrades, contact the appropriate professional for the job.

How to make your yard safe for kids

Are you a parent or grandparent to young children? If so, it’s important to think about risk prevention when you design your landscaping. This will ensure you can provide a safe space for your little ones to play. Here are a few tips to get you started.

• Create a designated space to safely store tools, fertilizers, pool chemicals and other potentially dangerous items. Don’t keep toys in the same area.

• If you plan to build a multi-tiered garden, consider using ornamental gates and ramps to reduce the risk of falls.

• Make sure pools, ponds and other bodies of water are fenced off and only accessible through a gate that latches.

• If you use stakes to support climbing plants in your vegetable garden, cover the ends to prevent injuries in the event that someone trips and falls.

Finally, when it comes to populating your garden, choose non-toxic species without latex or thorns. Or better yet, opt for edible plants.
Tips for a greener thumb

Horticulture enthusiasts, rejoice! It’s time to start planting the seeds of this summer’s garden. Tempted to start your own? Don’t worry: being a beginner doesn’t mean that you can’t do excellent work. Here are ten tips to help any gardening novice grow like a pro.

1. Plan it out. Before you get your hands dirty, try to envision your ideal garden as a whole. Sketch the layout of the space you have to work with and its surroundings. No matter how big or small your project may be, proper planning is the key to success.

2. Acquire tools. Digging, planting and maintaining your garden requires some basic equipment. A beginner’s toolbox should include a spade, a hoe, a rake, a trowel, a wheelbarrow, a watering can, some shears and a pair of gloves. Having the right tools makes gardening infinitely more enjoyable and helps prevent injuries.

3. Mind the lighting. Your garden or flowerbeds should ideally be located in a spot that receives lots of sunlight and little wind, but many species do well in shadier conditions. Before you settle on a variety to sow, consider its solar needs and whether or not you can fulfill them.

4. Prepare the soil. Provide your plants with the best possible soil conditions and watch them thrive! Removing rocks and pebbles, tillling the ground and adding some fertilizer goes a long way in creating a fertile space to grow.

5. Keep bloom cycles in mind. Enjoy the results of your hard work for as long as you can by including plants that flower at different times of the season in your garden.

6. Match colors. Try to match your flowers to your home’s exterior for a stunning, cohesive effect. Don’t feature too many hues, however, to avoid a cluttered look.

7. Plant in groups. Foster crosspollination and improve your garden’s vitality by planting in bunches. Avoid isolating single specimens — your plants are social creatures too!

8. Mix it up. Create a balanced look by varying the height and shape of the plants in your garden.

9. Give it space. Your adorable sprouts and tiny seeds will eventually grow into full-fledged adult plants. Consider how large they’ll be once they reach maturity and plan accordingly. Always follow the recommended planting depth for each variety as well.

10. Ask for help. Need some assistance? Don’t hesitate to seek advice from the pros at your local gardening center or nursery. Their valuable expertise could make a world of difference when it comes to achieving the landscaping of your dreams.
When is the best time to water your plants?

Do you usually water your plants in the middle of the day when the sun is at its zenith? If so, you should rethink that habit! Midday is actually the worst time to accomplish this task. Ecologically speaking, you risk wasting more water due to the strong sunlight prompting rapid evaporation.

The solution? Take out the hose either in the early hours of the morning or when the sun starts to set. At daybreak the sun is still cool, which means water won’t evaporate as swiftly.

Furthermore, it’s actually healthy for a plant’s foliage to dry out gradually throughout the day. A drier foliage protects your flowers and shrubs from disease related to high levels of humidity.

Consequently, when watering at dusk, aim for the ground rather than the foliage. If not, humidity will cling to your plants throughout the long hours of the night, which can cause spores or other harmful bacteria to grow.

For more practical advice regarding the proper maintenance of your flowers, trees and shrubs, make your way down to your local nursery or garden center today!

A buyer’s guide to washers and dryers

Are you in the market for a washer and dryer? Here are some things to keep in mind as you shop for your new appliances.

Size. Measure how much space you have to accommodate a washer and dryer. Keep in mind that you need to leave room behind both appliances for plumbing and ventilation. You should also factor in how many people will use the machines.

Type. Top-load washing machines with agitators are often the most affordable option, but they tend to be louder, less efficient and more harsh on clothes than high-efficiency top-loaders. Alternatively, you can opt for a front-load washer, which uses a tumble method to clean clothes. This causes less wear on fabrics and removes more water for quicker drying.

Dryers only come in front-load configurations. If you want to save space, buy frontload appliances with front-mounted display panels so you can stack them.

Features. Most new washers and dryers come with a variety of energy-saving features such as automatic temperature control and moisture sensors. To make sure your appliances are energy efficient, be sure to look for the Energy Star certificate. To find the right washing machine and dryer for your home, visit the appliance stores in your area.
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**PENDING**

This wonderfully updated home has vaulted ceilings, newer flooring, and a bright kitchen! The fenced backyard has a large deck, grass and play structure for fun! Air conditioners were installed in 2018. Our buyers will benefit from this move-in ready home in a quiet Sherwood neighborhood. MLS# 20230687

**PENDING**

1517 Charming home with very large bedrooms and a main floor office currently used as a third bedroom. The eat in kitchen has everything you want including an electric glass top range, black appliances, pantry, & bar seating. Features include gas fireplace, newer laminate flooring, and heat pump. Our buyers have been patiently waiting for this opportunity to present itself. Our first-time home buyer is delighted to make this offer. MLS# 22340673

**PENDING**

Beautiful single level home on nearly 1/2 acre with 4 bedrooms + an office is nestled in a neighborhood area with a single car garage. This home is located close to everything including a great work bench and cabinets as well as off street parking. This cozy home is located on a quiet cul-de-sac and has a brick fireplace. MLS# 21534957

**JUST SOLD**

Great location with convenience to schools, library, parks, and golf course. This home offers 3 beds, 2 baths and a wood burning fireplace in the family room. The garage boasts a great work bench and cabinets as well as off street parking. MLS# 22340673

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GREEN IDEAS
4 tips for sustainable gardening

The produce sold in grocery stores often travels hundreds or even thousands of miles before ending up on your plate. Do you want to grow your own fruits and vegetables? If so, here are four tips for gardening sustainably.

1. Choose the right place
Do your research to find the best location to plant your garden. Take into account the soil type and amount of sunlight the area receives to ensure your plants grow well and won’t require much maintenance.

2. Feed the soil
Feeding your soil with compost is the best way to grow healthy plants. Doing so will allow you to avoid concentrated fertilizers that could make your crops more vulnerable to disease or pollute the water table if incorrectly applied.

3. Save water
Avoid planting vegetables that require a lot of water. Instead, choose varieties that can easily adapt to the average amount of rainfall in your area. You should also set up a rainwater collection bin. Remember to water generously but not every day.

4. Embrace imperfection
Gardens are living things. Therefore, you must accept that yours won’t look perfect. Inevitably, insects will nibble on your plants. Just remember that birds will feed on the bugs, and pollinators will visit your flowers. Simply sit back and watch nature in action.

This will promote root oxygenation and allow your plants to draw water from deep within the soil.

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