

## Make Your New Year's Resolution To Plan A More Sustainable Garden

Leimone Waite, Doug Mandel, Master Gardeners, Jan. 5, 2019

**Q:** My new year's resolution is to live more sustainably. What can I do in my yard to support this resolution?

**A:** University of California Master Gardeners devoted a lot of time to training and outreach materials on this very topic to try and encourage Californians to adopt more sustainable practices in their landscape and gardens.

Master Gardener and sustainable landscape expert Doug Mandel put together this list of the top 10 things you can do to make your landscape more green:

- 1. Landscape for the local climate.** Consider the existing site characteristics and fire considerations, and choose native or Mediterranean plants that do well in our climate.
- 2. Landscape for less in landfills.** Practice grass cycling. Compost. Match the plant with the space to reduce pruning. Reducing water can also reduce pruning. Salvage and recycle when possible.
- 3. Nurture the soil.** Save topsoil and prevent erosion. Plant living ground covers. Mulch. Promote beneficial soil organisms. Avoid synthetic fertilizers. Minimize pesticide use.
- 4. Conserve water.** Select low water use plants. Minimize turf. Mulch. Group plants into zones based on water use. Apply the right amount of water for the plant type and age, for the soil type and slope and in cycles to water deeply without runoff. Maintain irrigation systems and perform an irrigation audit to check your irrigation system.
- 5. Conserve energy.** Plant deciduous trees to shade paved areas, the west and south side of buildings and air conditioners. Use solar landscape lights. Minimize turf as it takes a lot of energy to maintain.
- 6. Protect water and air quality.** Mulch to avoid erosion. Minimize impervious surfaces and maximize rain gardens. Plant trees. Maintain lawn and garden equipment. Minimize turf. Use integrated pest management (IPM) practices.
- 7. Create and protect wildlife habitat.** Choose native plants, and plant diverse species. Restore wildlife corridors by vertical layering. Provide water, cover, food and space. Avoid pesticides. Avoid planting invasive species. Nurture the nature we have in our yards.
- 8. Choose responsible IPM practices.** Before using a pesticide or herbicide, research for other less toxic methods for controlling weeds or pests. Go to <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/>. Ask yourself if the pest is really bugging you before you spray.
- 9. Educate yourself** regarding the benefits of short-term satisfaction versus the long-term goal of becoming more sustainable.
- 10. Save money** by saving energy, water and time.

A couple of good resources for information on sustainable landscaping are Sacramento's River Friendly Landscape program and the University of California Davis Arboretum. The River Friendly Landscape site is a great resource for sustainable landscaping ideas and practices:

<http://www.ecolandscape.org/riverfriendly/> The website has an easy-to-use eco-friendly benefits

calculator to determine how sustainable your landscape may already be or can become with a few changes. Another good place for inspiration on landscaping with low-water-use plants and sample landscape designs is the UC Davis Arboretum All-Star site at <https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/arboretum-all-stars>.

*The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email [mastergardener@shastacollege.edu](mailto:mastergardener@shastacollege.edu). The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.*