



# How Earth-Friendly is Your Garden?

UCCE San Diego County Master Gardener Program

[www.MasterGardenerSD.org/sustain](http://www.MasterGardenerSD.org/sustain)



## I. Select Appropriate Plants and Trees (Minimum 5)

### Use the Right Plant in the Right Place:

- 1. My plants and trees are predominately water-wise and need minimal fertilizer, pesticide, and pruning. (Exception – edibles.)
- 2. When choosing plants and trees I consider the conditions in my yard and select plants that work with my microclimate – sun/shade/soil type/etc.
- 3. My garden does not include invasive species such as pampas grass, highway ice plant, or Arundo - giant reed.
- 4. My plants and trees are chosen in accordance to fire-resistant guidelines.
- 5. When mature my plants and trees will cover at least 50% of the garden area to help alleviate the heat island effect.
- 6. I avoid overplanting by selecting plants and trees based on their size at maturity to reduce maintenance, green waste and improve plant health.
- 7. If power lines are present, trees and plants under the power lines do not touch or grow close to the lines.

### Use Lawn Appropriately:

- 7. I do not have a lawn.
- 8. My lawn is frequently used for recreation.
- 9. My lawn no more than 25% of my yard.
- 10. I have chosen water-wise grass; I maintain it to promote water savings.
- 11. When mowing, less than 1/3 of the length of the grass blade is removed.

### Grow Food:

My garden includes:

- 12. Vegetables appropriate for the season.
- 13. Fruit trees, shrubs, vines, or berries chosen with chill hours in mind.
- 14. Pollinator-attracting plants such as herbs.
- 15. Water-wise edibles e.g. dragon fruit, figs, pineapple guava, etc.
- 16. Chickens, honeybees or edible fish, in compliance with local regulations.

### Include Trees:

Trees can be a valuable part of an Earth-Friendly Garden

- 17. When planting a new tree, I choose the right tree for the right place. (I consider *Sunset* climate zone, watering needs, shade, food value, eventual mature size, root spread, litter.)
- 18. When planting a new tree, I remove all circling roots. (Small trees are usually less root-bound and grow faster.)
- 19. I deeply water my trees when the soil under the drip line (perimeter of the canopy) 6" to 8" below the soil surface is dry and crumbly. I apply enough water to penetrate the root zone. I keep trunks dry and allow soil to dry out between waterings.
- 20. I have a tree pruned only for four D's - removing only Dead, Diseased, Damaged, and Dysfunctional branches.

## II. Protect Wildlife (Minimum 2)

- 1. My garden has a diverse collection of plants which provide year-round food for wildlife.
- 2. My garden includes appropriate native plants to provide food for native wildlife.
- 3. I provide water sources for drinking and bathing. (Water sources must be protected from mosquito breeding.)
- 4. My garden provides cover such as shrubby plants or birdhouses for shelter and raising young.
- 5. Pet cats are kept indoors.
- 6. I avoid using pesticides, synthetic or organic, to avoid harming beneficial organisms such as bees, ladybugs, lacewings.
- 7. I avoid or minimize the use of loud garden equipment such as lawn mowers, chain saws, and leaf blowers because the noise discourages wildlife.

## III. Practice Responsible Pest Management (Minimum 5)

Other than a pesticide, what else might work? There are many ways to manage pests and diseases other than pesticides. Do you practice:

- 1. **Cultural control** Use the right pruning, fertilizing or watering regimes, and select pest and disease resistant varieties.
- 2. **Physical control** Use mulches to keep weeds from growing, or solarization to kill soilborne pathogens and weed seeds.
- 3. **Mechanical control** Pull weeds, spray leaves forcefully with water to remove insects or use traps or barriers to exclude pests.
- 4. **Biological control** Release beneficial organisms such as insects that eat or parasitize other insects.
- 5. **Replanting** If a plant requires regular pesticide treatment, consider replanting with a more pest-resistant species or variety.
- 6. **Crop Rotation** To reduce pest build up, grow closely related vegetables in different locations each year.
- 7. **Monitoring Pests** Check your landscape at least monthly for pests and diseases. Check edibles at least weekly. Traps can be used to monitor specific pests, for example, yellow sticky traps can be used to monitor insects and board traps can be used to monitor snail and slugs.

**If you decide to use a pesticide – either organic or synthetic** - use it in an integrated pest management (IPM) program that includes use of nonchemical methods. In almost all cases, a combination of measures will provide the most satisfactory and long-term pest control.

- 8. I properly identify pests and diseases before taking any action.
- 9. I use the least toxic methods to control garden pests.
- 10. I tolerate a small number of garden pests.
- 11. I read and follow instructions on pesticide products.
- 12. I monitor citrus trees for Asian citrus psyllid. These psyllids transmit a fatal citrus disease.

#### **IV. Nurture the Soil** : (Minimum 1) / (*Skip if patio or similar garden*)

- 1. Compost or other organic soil amendments is added to beds annually.
- 2. Tree roots, shrubs and beds are mulched with 2" – 4" of biodegradable mulch. (Keep mulch 6" from the bases of trees and shrubs to protect trunks.)
- 3. Inorganic material such as gravel is used to mulch plants that are sensitive to "wet feet" such as cacti, some succulents, and some California natives.
- 4. Ornamental (non-edible) plants and trees are fertilized only when they show signs of deficiency or if a soil test indicates fertilization is required.
- 5. Organic or low-release synthetic fertilizers are used if needed.
- 6. Pathways are used to navigate the landscape to prevent soil compaction. Non-turf planted areas are seldom walked on.

#### **V. Conserve Water and Protect Water Quality** (Minimum 4)

- 1. Plants are grouped by water needs (hydrozoning).
- 2. Irrigation is tailored to the needs of the plants.
- 3. A hose-end nozzle is used to shut off water while moving between plants when watering by hand.
- 4. Sprinkler heads are adjusted to prevent overspray.
- 5. Run times are adjusted to prevent irrigation run-off. Multiple run times may be needed.
- 6. Drip irrigation, soaker hoses, or micro-spray heads that apply water at a slower rate are used so water absorbs into the soil.
- 7. A kitchen timer (or similar) is used when watering with a hose-end or manual sprinklers to ensure that the water is turned off promptly.
- 8. I avoid irrigating during the hottest part of the day.
- 9. Leaking or broken sprinklers, pipes and faucets are repaired promptly.
- 10. Automatic irrigation is turned off when rain is expected.
- 11. I sweep or rake - not hose - my driveway, patio, and walkways.
- 12. Rainwater is retained on-site using rain barrels or swales. (Rain barrels must be protected from mosquito breeding.)
- 13. A gray water system is used in compliance with local regulations.
- 14. Driveways, sidewalks, patios or paths are perforated or made from water permeable materials to allow rainwater to soak into the soil.

#### **VI. Conserve Energy and Protect Air Quality** (Minimum 1) /

(*Skip if patio, school, community or similar garden*)

- 1. Trees or structures shade the south or west side of my house.
- 2. Trees or structures shade concrete or asphalt areas.
- 3. Laundry is hung outside to dry.
- 4. I prune, mow, sweep or blow with hand or electric tools.
- 5. I avoid use of leaf blowers in order to reduce particulate matter in the air.

#### **VII. Reduce Waste - Send Less to the Landfill** (Minimum 2)

- 1. I consider eventual (mature) size when choosing plants.
- 2. I avoid over-watering and over-fertilizing to minimize pruning/mowing.
- 3. I use chipped tree and shrub prunings as mulch.
- 4. Garden waste is composted on site.
- 5. Fruit and vegetable waste is composted with worms (vermicomposting).
- 6. Green waste containers are used to recycle garden waste that is not composted on-site.
- 7. I have re-used concrete leftover from demolition as "urbanite" – for recycled concrete walls, paths, etc.





# Congratulations on your Earth-Friendly Garden!



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First Name:

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Where did you hear about us?

Please tell us a little bit about yourself and your Earth-Friendly garden:

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Sign purchased? Yes / No Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Payment method \_\_\_\_\_

Sign picked up? Yes / No Sold by (MG name) \_\_\_\_\_

Client signature \_\_\_\_\_