



How to Create a Permaculture Garden

A permaculture garden is one that is designed to mimic the natural growth and interaction between species so that no fertilizers or pesticides need to be used. Typically relying on native plants and designed in such a way as to exploit sunlight and water patterns, permaculture gardens are often used to grow food and herbs. They tend to be smaller than other gardens, with all fertilizing needs (usually compost) contained within its parameters. The permaculture principle of not damaging the ecosystem and of relying on nature's course often leads to extremely varied, healthy gardens that require relatively little care.

Steps

- 1 Familiarize yourself with the native plants, predators, and pests in your area.**
- 2 Observe how the sun strikes the site of your future garden.**
- 3 Draw up a list of desired plants and group them according to sun and water needs and pest concerns.**
- 4 Create one or more beds for your smaller plants.**
 - Make raised beds: areas of soil about 6 to 12 inches (15 to 30 cm) on top of the ground. Raised beds are better for your garden because they do not require you to till the ground, which exhausts the nutrients in the soil.
 - Your beds should be wide enough so that you can fit two rows of plants in them but narrow enough so that you can lean in from the side and reach the middle.
- 5 Start with your biggest plants and place them so they provide shade for smaller, sun-sensitive plants.**
- 6 Place plants requiring the most care closest to your home.**
- 7 Place plants requiring similar amounts of sun and water in the same bed.** Consider pests when placing plants.
 - Plants can act as pesticides for other plants; for example, nearby marigolds can deter worms from tomatoes. Consult your local nursery or garden society for information about such relationships between plants in your area.
- 8 Lay mulch down on your beds.**
 - Mulch helps prevent weed growth and enriches the soil, negating the need for chemical weed killers or fertilizers. You can also avoid tilling the soil, which can drain nutrients. Popular and effective mulches include wood chips, cardboard, and newspaper.
- 9 Create a composting system.**
 - Compost is natural fertilizer which reuses waste products for the benefit of a garden. A pile of uncooked kitchen waste, garden waste (like weeds, dead plants, or leaves), and other organic matter mixed with paper scraps or sawdust is a simple and effective composting system.

10 Implement a low-waste watering system.

- Drip irrigation, which uses a rubber tube punctured with small holes and draped along a bed, is a good way of getting water directly into the soil and avoiding needless evaporation. Water only when necessary and remember to vary the amount of water based on different plants' needs.
- Collect water run-off from gutters or other surfaces using large barrels; recycle this water into your irrigation system.

Tips

- Try introducing trellises or hanging plants into your garden. These methods help you take advantage of your space while providing shade to plants that need it and attracting certain bugs or pests away from the plants below.
- The design of a permaculture garden will depend on the types of plants you wish to grow. In general, you should fit as many plants as possible into each bed and focus on plant diversity so that resources are conserved and so that plants can beneficially interact with one another. One popular design is the keyhole or horseshoe, in which raised beds are arranged in a ring around a central area in which the gardener works. This design maximizes the use of space and encourages interaction among the plants.
- Consider the growth cycle of plants when creating your garden. If you plant late-growing species next to plants that have already bloomed or are dying, you can take advantage of the nutrient-rich soil created by the previous plant. Don't reserve beds or large areas of soil for a specific time of year; try to have all areas of your garden in use as much as possible.

Things You'll Need

- Soil
- Seeds
- Compost system
- Watering system

Sources and Citations

- http://www.theecologist.org/green_green_living/gardening/451581/a_beginners_guide_to_permaculture_gardening.html
- <http://www.gardeningknowhow.com/organic/the-essence-of-permaculture-gardening.htm>
- http://www.theecologist.org/green_green_living/gardening/451581/a_beginners_guide_to_permaculture_gardening.html

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