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Home & Garden Inspire & Motivate

Reading time: 2 mins

Earth Action: Make a Garden Plan



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Earth911 is honoring the 52 years of Earth Day with 52 [Actions for the Earth](#). Each week through Earth Day 2023, we will share an action you can take to [invest in the Earth](#) and make your own life more sustainable. Gardeners love the new year because that's when the seed catalogs start showing up in mailboxes. If you've already [canceled all your catalogs](#), this week, you can take action for the Earth by making sustainable garden plans instead of browsing catalogs for plants you'll never actually grow.

Action: Plan a Garden

Green Gardening

Spending time in the garden is one of the easiest ways to experience the outdoors. And doing garden work makes a lot of people feel closer to nature. But ironically, a lot of the things we do to make our gardens grow aren't very good for the environment. [Lawns](#) are the most notorious. Turfgrass is a monoculture that covers more than [three times](#) as much area as any food crop in the United

What Do You Think?

Are you considering moving because of climate change?

- I'm researching my options to decide
- No
- Yes

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States. Maintaining that massive monoculture results in ^{CLOSE} pollution and health risks from [fertilizers](#), weed killers, and [gas mowers](#). Nearly [one-third](#) of all residential water is sprinkled on our lawns.

But lawns aren't the only culprits. The [pesticides](#) we drench our plants in have even more impacts. Pesticides [weaken our food](#), kill beneficial insects as well as pests, and can be toxic to wildlife and [kill pets](#). More than [90% of Americans'](#) bodies contain pesticide residues. Pesticides and fertilizers contaminate our [groundwater](#) and [drinking water](#) and contribute to dead zones in oceans.

Even the plants we grow can have a negative impact. Most of the [invasive species](#) that harm natural areas were purposely introduced through cultivation, usually as ornamental plants.

Pick Your Project

This may be the year you [completely relandscape](#) to create an eco-haven. But it's easy to dream up projects in January that are too much to manage in July. So make a realistic plan. If starting from scratch is too much, take incremental steps. Consider converting a part of your yard to a more sustainable design.

- Replace your turfgrass monoculture with an [eco-lawn alternative](#).
- [Tear out lawn](#) to make room for [other things](#).
- Incorporate more [native plants](#) or [nativars](#) into your garden.
- Create a [pollinator garden](#) in part or all of your garden space.
- Start a [vegetable garden](#).
- Shift toward [xeriscaping](#).
- [Plant a tree](#) – with proper [planning](#) so it survives.
- Plant an [edible hedge](#) to benefit you and the birds.
- Build sustainable [stormwater infrastructure](#) to minimize runoff.

Instead of changing what you plant, you could choose to adopt some [more sustainable](#) maintenance habits for the landscape you already have. Here are some greener gardening ideas:

- Build a [compost bin](#) and learn [how to use it](#).
- If you already have a vegetable garden, consider [dry gardening](#), organic gardening, or permaculture techniques.
- Certify your yard as a [wildlife refuge](#).
- Adopt [pollinator-friendly](#) gardening habits.
- Become [water-wise](#) in your garden and on your [lawn](#).
- Adopt more sustainable [lawn care practices](#) that can [save you work](#), too.

Whatever you decide to do, designing on the fly while you're at the nursery in the spring is a great way to waste money and plants. Now is the time to figure out how you're going to make your garden more sustainable in 2023.

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