

EA - MIDLANDS - Box 5

Enjoy your GARDEN

CARE FOR.
OUR ENVIRONMENT.



ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY

We are a nation of gardeners. In gardens large and small, in town and country, we proudly produce plants and flowers and vegetables. Gardening gives many of us great enjoyment.

But, often unintentionally, we don't always do it in a way that best cares for our environment.

So, the Environment Agency, launched in 1996 to protect and improve our vital natural resources of water, land and the air we breathe, has produced this booklet. Read on - and pick up some practical tips.

ENJOY YOUR GARDEN
- CARE FOR OUR
ENVIRONMENT.



Enjoy *care for our* your *environment* garden

Preventing and Controlling Pollution

When you see caterpillars devouring your vegetables, or weeds invading your prize perennials, you naturally want to take action. But it is all too easy to reach for pesticides and weedkillers which may solve one problem but create another.

So, as you zap the aphids or spray the weeds and bugs:

- *use chemicals with caution;*
- *read labels carefully; and*
- *follow manufacturer's instructions to the letter.*

Being too casual could seriously damage your garden, but more importantly, your health.

In your natural urge to rescue your plants, never overlook the possible harmful effects of chemicals on the surroundings.

"The garden trowel and the hoe are the best weed deterrents - and they are environmentally friendly and organic."



Clean pond, happy fish!

Water Features

A cocktail of chemicals will probably sort out the weeds and the bugs, but if there is a pond or stream close by, and the weather turns rainy or windy, that cocktail could cause harm. Pesticides or weedkillers getting into an ornamental pond full of koi carp can be lethal.

Also, fertilizer makes pondweed grow out of control, choking the pond and the fish.



Safe storage

"We strongly recommend that you use biological methods (organic gardening) rather than toxic chemicals."



Poor storage

You're probably not aware that you could be breaking the law, but the Water Resources Act 1991 states: "It is an offence to cause or knowingly permit any poisonous, noxious or polluting matter to enter controlled waters."

That would almost certainly cover pesticides and weedkillers.

Storing your chemicals is a problem. Our advice is to buy just enough for your immediate needs - and avoid the problem! But if you have to store garden chemicals, then please make sure that you keep them in a safe place that can be locked up. And, ideally, keep them in a clean, dry and well-ventilated space.

Here are one or two other do's and don'ts:

- don't store chemical containers in direct sunlight
- do keep them well out of reach of children and animals
- don't pour chemicals from one empty bottle into another unmarked container.

Disposing of Waste

*"Never pour chemicals into drains or anywhere near a watercourse."
This is not only bad practice - it's illegal!*



Please make sure that you get rid of your left-over chemicals and containers safely. Use up the diluted left-overs on the plants being treated.

Some chemicals don't mix well. So, if you pour them out, one after the other, onto the soil, you could start a chemical reaction particularly dangerous to water supplies. Even without being mixed, some garden products can harm people and animals if not properly used.

If a product is found to be risky, The Pesticide Safety Directorate can have it removed from the domestic market.

They did this recently with a product used to control pests and diseases on roses, without affecting bees and ladybirds, but it was found to irritate people's eyes if not diluted correctly. So, it is no longer approved for use by amateur gardeners. You should take this kind of product to your local civic amenity centre for safe disposal. This goes for any bottles or containers which may still be full, but need to be disposed of for some reason, such as reaching the end of their shelf life.

Put them in a leakproof container, like an old plastic bowl, and take them to your local centre. And if you can't take them, you can arrange collection through your local council.

To sum up:

- dilute well and use up left-overs on plants being treated
- never get rid of chemicals down the drain
- keep to the rules for safety and environmental protection
- dispose of used chemical containers carefully.



"Water is one of our most precious resources and we all need to protect it."

Protecting

Enjoy your gardening, but please don't waste water. Obviously, you can make this worse if you insist on watering your lawn or your garden every day. It usually isn't necessary anyway - and it can even damage your plants.

Most shrubs, trees and perennials don't need much watering after their first year in the ground. Providing that they are well watered in their first season, they will put down roots and find their own water supply.



A healthy garden

Recent droughts have certainly brought that home to us."

No rain means low rivers; low rivers mean low flows; and low flows can mean water restrictions, including bans on using the hosepipe in your garden. You can help before it gets to that.

If you water them too often by hose, you will cause their roots to travel to the surface, weakening the plants. So, leave plants alone until they show signs of wilting.

That's the time to water them, preferably in the cool of the evening to reduce evaporation losses. Green lawns look beautiful, but to keep them like that during a hot summer uses up an enormous amount of water.

"A hose or a sprinkler running for an hour can use up to 1,100 litres of water - enough to fill more than 122 buckets."

Grass is resilient. It may turn brown and look dead, but a good downpour of rain will soon perk it up again. If you mow the lawn less often, leaving the grass a little longer, it won't suffer quite so much. Also, leaving the cuttings on the surface helps to retain moisture.

If the surface is hard baked, spiking it with a fork helps the moisture to reach the roots more easily. A good feed in the spring and autumn boosts your lawn and helps it to cope with dry weather.

With summer bedding plants, using your watering can is an efficient way of directing a measured dose to individual plants. Water butts are an efficient way of storing up rainwater for later use - and acid-loving plants thrive better on natural rainwater.

"Careful hoeing and weeding ensures that watering helps plants, not weeds."

If you take care at the planting stage, using organic matter, you give the plants a good start and encourage them to put down strong roots.

Mulching at the start of summer helps plants to

retain moisture - and keeps the weeds down.

"More indoor, greenhouse and patio plants are likely to be killed by overwatering than any other factor."



Vegetable gardens can also suffer from overwatering, which dilutes that taste of most crops.

If you live in an area prone to drought, you can help by choosing plants that thrive in dry conditions, such as lavender, rosemary and sedums.

"A little thought will keep your garden looking lovely, whilst saving one of nature's most precious resources."



Delphinium "Blue Butterfly"
Right: Delphinium "Dreaming Spires"

Did you know? On Average



**=122.2
buckets**



A hose uses 1,100 litres an hour (18.3 litres a minute)



**=122.2
buckets**



A sprinkler uses 1,100 litres an hour



**=33.3
buckets**



Washing your car with a hosepipe uses 300 litres



**=11.1
buckets**



A garden seep hose uses 100 litres an hour per 10 metre run



= 9 litres/2 gallons

Dry loving plants

Shrubs for dry sunny positions:

Abelia
Artemisia
Berberis
Buddleia
Ceanothus
Cistus
Cotoneaster
Cytisus
Escallonia
Genista
Hebe
Lavender
Phormium
Potentilla
Rosemary
Sage
Santolina
Senecio
Yucca

Hardy perennials for dry sunny positions:

Acanthus
Achillea
Alstroemeria
Bergenia
Crocosmia
Dianthus (pinks)
Gypsophilla
Helianthemum (rock rose)
Iris
Kniphofia (red hot poker)
Nepeta (catmint)
Papaver (poppy)
Penstemon
Pulsatilla
Sedum
Thyme

Hardy perennials for dry shade:

Ajuga (bugle)
Alchemilla (lady's mantle)
Bergenia
Lamium
Pulmonaria (lungwort)
Vinca

Shrubs for dry shade:

Amelanchier
Berberis
Box
Cotoneaster
Euonymus
Hedera (ivy)
Ilex (holly)
Mahonia
Prunus laurocerasus
Sambucus (elder)
Skimmia



Using Compost



*"Home-made
compost
gives plants
a good start
in life, helps
to reduce
watering and
eases
pressure on
waste
disposal."*

Compost is good for your garden - and even better for the environment. If you make room for a compost bin, you can recycle a lot of household waste. Instead of using the dustbin (and ultimately taking up valuable space in our landfill sites).

Potato peelings, used teabags, eggshells and lots of other food wastes make excellent compost. You can also use crushed eggshells as a barrier against slugs and snails.

Compost also helps worms to flourish, vital for healthy soil, it saves you money and reduces the need to use peat-based products, helping our peat bogs. Experts have come up with coir compost, made from coconut waste, and this has been a success.





Helping Conservation

You can attract all types of fauna to your garden by planting specific shrubs and flowers. Buddleia bushes, for instance, are so well known for attracting butterflies that they are commonly called "butterfly bushes". And then there are wildflowers. Seed merchants now sell packets of wildflower seeds. You could set aside a corner of your garden for wildflowers, free from regular cultivation, mowers and, of course, chemicals.

Such small natural areas provide enjoyment, attract wildlife, inform children. Ponds, too, encourage wildlife. Frogs, newts and toads - all gardeners' friends - can colonise the pond, and dragonflies will be encouraged to come.

And finally

If you take the advice we have offered you in these few pages, you will help enormously to protect our environment now - and for the future.

Enjoy your garden - care for our environment.

We at the Environment Agency wish you well.
We are here to help you. Please will you help us?



Top left: Cowslip
Above: Field Scabious
Left: Feverfew

All floral illustrations kindly supplied
by Suttons Seeds

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