

# Garden with care and protect the environment



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



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ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



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## GARDEN WITH CARE AND PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

As a nation, we are keen gardeners. Whether it be a small roof garden in the city centre or a much larger plot in a rural area, we nurture and care for our plants zealously. What we don't always do, however, is undertake our gardening in the most environmentally friendly way. That is often because of lack of knowledge and this leaflet sets out some easy to follow tips that will allow your garden to flourish while safeguarding the environment at the same time.

The leaflet is published by the Environment Agency which started operations on 1 April 1996 and is responsible for a wide range of activities to secure the environmental protection and improvement of water, land and air.



## POLLUTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL.....

is an important function of the Agency. Many of the products used in the garden are toxic and come under the remit of the Water Resources Act, 1991. "It is an offence to cause or knowingly permit any poisonous, noxious or polluting matter to enter controlled waters". Pesticides and weedkillers would almost certainly come under this part of the Act. It's all too easy to zap the aphids with a fast-acting spray, or paint an invasive weed with the latest chemical product to hit the market, but care needs to be shown to protect the environment. All garden chemicals should be used with caution. Labels should be read in detail and the manufacturers' instructions followed to the letter. Taking a short cut could have disastrous effects, both to human health and to the flora and fauna being treated.

Well tended gardens are good breeding areas for pests, weeds and disease. A vegetable garden decimated by voracious caterpillars, or a bed of prize perennials choked with weeds galvanizes most gardeners into rapid and sometimes radical action. Quite often the desire to rescue the plants overrides the need to protect the surrounding area from harmful chemicals. A cocktail of chemicals will probably deal with the bugs and weeds, but if there is a pond or watercourse close by and the weather turns rainy or windy, untold damage can be done. The best weed deterrent is the trowel and hoe, they are environmentally friendly and organic. An ornamental pond full of koi carp could be wiped out by pesticides or weedkillers getting into it. Alternatively, fertilizer will cause pondweed to grow out of control and choke the pond and its fish to death.

We strongly recommend that biological methods (organic gardening) be used before resorting to toxic chemicals. If all else fails and chemicals have to be used, it is better to buy just enough for your immediate needs thus avoiding the problem of storage.



Poor storage



Safe storage



*Never pour chemicals down the drain!!*

# Waste dis

If storage of garden chemicals is necessary, provision should be made to ensure that they are kept in a clean, dry and well ventilated safe area with lockable doors. Containers should not be in direct sunlight and should, of course, be well out of the reach of children and animals. The careful gardener would never decant any kind of chemical from its original container into empty lemonade bottles or other suchlike unmarked containers.

By growing the right plants, gardeners can encourage predators that eat the pests, thus creating an organically protected garden. Ground cover plants will, of course, give the weeds a hard time.

So the following golden rules should always apply when chemicals are needed in the garden:

**Buy what you need immediately and no more**

**Read and follow manufacturers instructions carefully**

**Store containers in a safe place**

**Exercise extreme care close to water.**

## WASTE DISPOSAL

is another important function that falls within the remit of the Agency. Once chemicals have been used in the garden, it is vital to ensure that the containers are carefully and safely disposed of. The empty bottles should be washed out with water, and the diluted washings used up on the plants being treated. Chemicals of any type should never be poured into drains or anywhere near a watercourse. It is illegal to dispose of them in this way.



# Disposal

Some chemicals do not mix very well and if gardeners did pour them one after the other into a drain or onto the land, they could set up a dangerous chemical reaction hazardous to water supplies.

If bottles and containers are still full, but have reached the end of their shelf life or need to be disposed of for any reason, they should be placed in a leakproof container (an old plastic washing up bowl, for example) and taken to the local civic amenity centre. These centres will take, free of charge, chemical containers of this type. If people are unable to get there in person, collection can be arranged through the local council.

Even without being mixed, some garden products can be harmful to people and animals if not used correctly. If a product is found to be at risk in any way, The Pesticide Safety Directorate is empowered to order its removal from the domestic market. A product called 'Roseclear' is a recent case in point. Although the product dealt effectively with the control of pests and diseases on roses without adversely affecting bees, ladybirds, etc., it was found to cause irritation to eyes if not diluted correctly and accordingly it is no longer approved for use by amateur gardeners. It is just this kind of product that should be taken to a local household recycling centre for safe disposal.

## Remember

Dilute well and use washings on the plants being treated

Never, ever use the drain

Observing rules for personal safety will protect both humans and the environment

Dispose of used chemical containers carefully



*Bad usage could destroy your pond and its fish!!*



## PROTECTION OF WATER RESOURCES

is another very important function of the Environment Agency. Water is one of our most precious resources and the droughts of recent years have underlined the need to protect our supplies as carefully as possible.

No rain means low rivers, low rivers mean low flows, and low flows can mean restrictions on water supplies. Once this stage has been reached, water companies may introduce bans on the use of hosepipes for watering gardens.

Gardeners can aggravate the water shortage problem if they insist upon watering their lawns and flowers on a daily basis during the dry summer months. Most shrubs, trees and perennial plants need little watering after their first year in the ground. Provided they are well watered in the first season, they will have put down adequate roots to enable them to find their own water supply. In fact if watered too frequently by hose, their roots will travel to the surface and weaken the plants. The best guide is to leave the plants alone until they show signs of wilting. Then, and only then, should they be watered, preferably in the cool of the evening to reduce evaporation losses.

Emerald green lawns look very attractive, but to keep them that way in the hot summer uses up an enormous amount of water. For instance, a hose or a sprinkler running for an hour can use up to 1100 litres of water. If this is repeated for seven days, the amount of water used is phenomenal, (enough to fill nearly 100 baths) and if the whole road did the same, the local river could very soon run dry! Grass is very resilient and whilst it may turn brown and look dead, a good downpour of rain will soon perk it up again. If the lawn is mowed less frequently and the grass left a little longer at this time of the year, it will not suffer quite so much. Leaving the cuttings on the surface of the lawn helps to retain moisture. If the surface of the lawn is baked hard, spiking it with a fork prior to watering will help the



*A well cared for garden.*



*Economical but effective watering.*



moisture reach the roots more easily. A good feed in the spring and autumn, using the products carefully, of course, will help boost the lawn and help it cope with dryer weather.

Plants that are more vulnerable to dry conditions such as summer bedding plants, hanging baskets, patio tubs, etc. do need a little more attention and more frequent watering can be necessary. Even these plants can be helped to retain moisture by using the right type of compost, lining baskets with plastic or moss and watering only in the early morning or the cool of the evening.

Using a watering can is a surefire way of getting a well measured dose to individual plants. Water butts are, of course, an efficient way of storing up rainwater for later use. Acid-loving plants thrive better on natural rainwater.

Hoeing and weeding ensures that any watering only reaches plants and doesn't feed the weeds. Care at the time of planting with use of organic matter gives plants a good start, as they are encouraged to put down good root systems from the beginning. Mulching at the start of summer helps plants to retain moisture and also keeps the weeds down. It is an interesting fact that more indoor, greenhouse and patio plants are likely to be killed by overwatering than by any other factor. The vegetable garden can also suffer from too much moisture as this dilutes the taste of most crops.

Gardeners living in an area prone to drought would do well to select plants that thrive in dry conditions such as lavender, rosemary, sedums, etc.

**A little thought will keep gardens looking lovely whilst conserving nature's precious resource.**

**Water wisely, and you can water well.**

*Delphinium "Blue Butterfly"*



*Delphinium  
"Dreaming Spires"*



*Russell Lupins*



# Did you know?

## On Average

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



**= 122.2  
Buckets**



**A Sprinkler  
uses 1,100  
litres an  
hour**



**= 122.2  
Buckets**



**Washing  
your car  
with a  
Hosepipe  
uses 300  
litres**



**= 33.3  
Buckets**



**A Garden  
Seep Hose  
uses 100  
litres an  
hour per 10  
metre run**



**= 11.1  
Buckets**



**= 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 shade:

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

## Hardy perennials for dry sunny positions:

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

## Shrubs for dry shade:

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

# Conserva



*Greater Knapweed*

## COMPOSTING

is good for the garden and even better for the environment. By preparing a small corner of the garden to take a compost bin, gardeners can recycle a lot of household waste that would otherwise find its way into the dustbin, and ultimately take up valuable space in our landfill sites. Vegetable parings, teabags and many other food wastes break down into an excellent compost. Eggshells can be used in this way unless gardeners use these crushed up as a barrier against slugs and snails. The resulting compost will give plants an excellent start in life, will help reduce the need for watering and will ease pressure on waste disposal. Worms will flourish in this environment and these creatures are vital to healthy soil.

A good supply of home made compost will reduce the need of gardeners to use peat based products. In order to protect our peat bogs, garden experts have come up with coir compost made from coconut waste. This has proved equally successful in gardens.



*Field Scabious*



*Harebell*

*All floral illustrations kindly supplied by Suttons Seeds of Torquay*

## CONSERVATION

Gardeners can attract all types of fauna by planting specific shrubs and flowers that attract them. Buddleia bushes, of course, are well known for attracting butterflies; they are commonly known as butterfly bushes. Seed merchants nowadays sell packets of wildflower seeds. A small corner of the garden could be set aside for a wildflower garden which would be untouched by mowers or from regular cultivation. Chemicals would, of course, be unnecessary.

These small natural areas attract all types of wildlife and can be such a source of pleasure and, of course, education to children. Ponds are another feature for encouraging wildlife. Frogs, newts, toads (all gardener friendly creatures) can soon colonise a pond and dragonflies will be encouraged to visit.

If gardeners heed the advice contained in this leaflet, they will enjoy safe and prosperous gardening and will help enormously to protect their environment for forthcoming generations.



*Cowslip*



*Wild Pansy*



*Feverfew*



## MANAGEMENT AND CONTACTS:

The Environment Agency delivers a service to its customers, with the emphasis on authority and accountability at the most local level possible. It aims to be cost-effective and efficient and to offer the best service and value for money.

Head Office is responsible for overall policy and relationships with national bodies including Government.

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## ENVIRONMENT AGENCY GENERAL ENQUIRY LINE

**0645 333 111**

The 24-hour emergency hotline number for reporting all environmental incidents relating to air, land and water.

## ENVIRONMENT AGENCY EMERGENCY HOTLINE

**0800 80 70 60**



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