



COOL PEOPLE Care

Growing a Green Garden

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Introduction

We've all been there—frustrated because we spent all kinds of money on fertilizers, Miracle-Gro, pesticides, and herbicides, and still our garden just isn't up to par. And about all those chemicals...can they really be helping your plants? It seems only logical that there is a price to pay for subjecting the earth (and you and your family!) to all that nasty stuff. Cool People Care is excited to show you how to make your garden flourish without all those chemicals—while saving you money! Not only that, but all our gardening tips are earth-friendly. You can have a beautiful, colorful, and healthy garden that your whole neighborhood will enjoy, and the earth will benefit.





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Chemical Clean Out

Use the weekend to properly dispose of your gardening chemicals.

If things thaw out a bit this weekend, head out to your garage or storage shed and properly dispose of your old gardening chemicals. With the planting season right around the corner, now is the time to get rid of the old, outdated pesticides and chemicals and stock up on earth friendly and organic growing remedies. Make sure you correctly dispose of the old stuff at a local processing place. In fact, it might be a great weekend for tossing out all of the dangerous chemicals in your house as you look forward to a greener, more natural spring.

By Sam Davidson

Go Native

By opting for native plants, you'll save time, money, and the environment.

As you're considering what you want to plant this fall and how you want to prepare for next year's garden, take some time to learn about the benefits of native plants. No matter where you live, by choosing to include native plants in your landscaping plans, you'll make things easier on you and the environment. Because they're ideally suited for your environment, native plants need less upkeep and maintenance from you. They also usually need less water, making sure you conserve that precious resource as well. One great guide for native plants near you is Nature's Native Gardening site.

By Sam Davidson





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Community Gardens

Don't garden in isolation.

As part of Gardening Week, we've already told you about how buying local is good and planting things for someone else is better. Now, spend the next 5 minutes learning about the concept of community gardens. These collaborative initiatives bring together folks from all over your community to collectively plant and harvest food and flowers with others. Depending upon the garden, some even donate the fruits of the land to those who are in need.

Find a garden near you and use the warming weather as an excuse to meet others while you beautify your neck of the woods.

By Sam Davidson

Thinking About Pesticides

What exactly are you putting on your lawn?

As part of Gardening Week, we want to call your attention to all that stuff you dump on your lawn every year.

Pesticides can keep bugs away from your daisies, but they may also be harmful for you and the environment.

Remember the following during your next trip to grab all your garden goodies:

- Try an organic pest remover that is environmentally safe
- Old coffee grounds keep away bugs (Starbucks offers their old grounds for free)
- Marigolds can deter the bag bugs
- With 110,000 folks poisoned from pesticides annually, any effort you make is worth it.

By Sam Davidson





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Farmers' Markets

Stay close to home: buy and plant local.

If you're feeling inspired by Gardening Week and want to try your hand at planting something, consider your local farmers' market for ideas. Farmers' Markets allow growers themselves to earn fair prices for their hard earned work. You can support your local farmers by purchasing their plants or pesticide-free lawn treatments. Many markets also offer some of the freshest produce and food as well, since these growers are near your neck of the woods. Also, because they're selling close to where they grow, there is less strain on the environment, as food isn't hauled from sea to shining sea.

By Sam Davidson

Useful Flowers

Put all those pretty flowers to use.

Gardening Week has begun here at CoolPeopleCare. Find us a person who doesn't enjoy a pretty flower every now and then and we'll show you someone who hasn't ever smelled the right pollen. Whether you've got a green thumb or not, there are lots of quick things you can do with flowers.

Consider planting some (rather than buying them) to do something organic and save some money. Once you've grown them, cut them and brighten someone's day in a nursing home, the hospital, your office, or toss one to a random stranger. Bright petals always make for brighter days.

By Sam Davidson





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Grounds on the Ground

Some coffee is just fit for the dirt.

In our composting series, we talked at great lengths about ways to turn trash (old food) into treasure (fresh compost). Maybe you're not quite ready to have a heap of food decomposing in your backyard. If that's the case, try the very small step of dumping used coffee grounds near your plants. These grounds can be a great addition to any garden or potted plants, as they will bring much-needed nitrogen to your plants. What's more, it's one more way to creatively use something that was previously only fit for the landfill. Sounds like a weekend project to me!

By Michelle Andrade

How Sustainable is Your Table?

What's for dinner?

We know that fresh food is better than frozen and that we need to choose food that hasn't traveled over 1,000 miles to arrive on our plate. Luckily, SustainableTable.org is here to help you on your quest to prepare and eat meals that are good for you and good for the environment. You can find stores near you that sell sustainable food, and even dig up some recipes that call for your newly procured goods. Issues of sustainability affect us in the kitchen, the garden, and nearly everywhere else. Learn today what it means to make your table sustainable.

By Sam Davidson





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Won't You Be My Neighbor?

Borrow sugar and prevent crime.

Warm weather is perhaps the best way to get to know your neighbors. Whether you're on an evening stroll or tending to your garden, stop and say "hey" to your neighbor. You are, in fact, each other's best defense against crime. Studies show that where neighbors work together, where they know and respect each other, there's less crime. You can also start or strengthen a Neighborhood Watch and invite neighbors to work together on all sorts of community problems. You don't have to pull a Fred Rogers, but you do have a responsibility to your neighbors and your community.

By Leigh Piper

Plant a Row

One row of your garden can help millions fight hunger.

If we've inspired you to plant some seeds, consider dedicating a row of your backyard veggie garden towards a good cause. Whether you enjoy tomatoes, carrots or eggplant, you can use a row in your garden in order to produce tasty food that is good for you (and someone else). With over 25 million people in the US suffering from poor diets, you can take extra food to your local food bank in order to help out. Do your part by offering some soil for this valuable cause. And if you don't garden, share this idea with a friend.

By Sam Davidson





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Check for Leaks

A quick trip outside could have you finding leaks and saving money.

Water leaks in your home might be wasting your valuable money and precious agua. Today, when you get home, before you turn on any faucets or flush any toilets, take a quick glance at your water meter (it could take 30 minutes for water to cycle through your plumbing system, so do this when no one's been at home). If the dial is moving, you've got a leak somewhere that needs fixing. See if any faucets are dripping and listen for leaks in toilets or pipes). Also, while you're outside, make sure your garden hoses aren't leaking any water.

By Sam Davidson

Unconventional (Re)Uses

Reusing is better than throwing away or recycling.

You try your best to recycle (and for that we applaud you), but some things just need to be thrown away. But what if you could keep stuff out of both the trashcan and recycling bin? Here are 3 items and a quick way to reuse them:

- Cardboard rolls from toilet paper or paper towels can be used to store plastic bags from the supermarket.
- Used dryer sheets in your pocket can repel mosquitoes
- Old coffee grounds keep away garden pests

What else can you get creative with today?

By Sam Davidson





Worms Ate My Garbage!

If reducing your waste is one of your resolutions for 2009, then Beth Richardson will show you how to wrangle worms so that they eat your food waste. Keep reading to learn more about the wonderful world of vericomposting.

Last summer I fulfilled a lifetime goal of mine – I started a worm bin. The fancy term for it is vermicomposting (composting with worms). But start a worm bin, and you can call yourself a worm wrangling, extra green, saver of the world. Composting with worms is much like a backyard compost pile, but the presence of the worms speeds up the process and creates a very fertile outcome – worm castings (poo).

What You Need to Get Started

It's easy to get started with vermicomposting. All you need is:

- A worm bin (nothing special – just an old storage tub with holes drilled in it will do)
- Brown matter (carbon) for the worm bin bedding (shredded newspaper, leaves, small pieces of cardboard).
- Green matter (nitrogen) for the worms to eat (just about any kitchen waste you might produce, with the exceptions of onions and citrus fruits).
- A little bit of water. Worms like the bin to be moist, about the moisture level of a wrung-out sponge.
- Worms. Worm bins need composting worms - not your ordinary earthworms - worms that live in compost piles. Two common worms for vermicomposting are Red Wigglers (*Eisenia foetida*) or Nightcrawlers (*Eisenia hortensis*). You can save a few from your local bait shop or order a pound or two from a worm farmer.

Give Worm Wrangling a Try

You can compost with worms anywhere you live. Keep a kitchen bin under the sink, or create a worm bin out of a storage bin that will slide under your bed. Or consider a larger bin that will live under your house or in your garage. Like people, worms need to be protected from too much heat in the summer or too much cold in the winter. Other than that, just feed them every week or so and they'll do the rest!

By Beth Richardson

Recycling Rain

It's free, there's a lot of it, and it's nature's way of quenching thirst. Why would you use anything else to water your plants?

In our continual quest to reduce our global footprint, my wife and I are always looking for ways to reduce, reuse and recycle. Thus, it was only a matter of time until we decided to do just that with something we don't pay for, we don't think a lot about, and that is usually associated with cats and dogs: the rain.

As beginner gardeners, we made sure to water what we planted, making certain that our flowers and shrubs would grow and blossom. After a while, we noticed that we were using more clean water to do so, increasing our water usage and our monthly water bill. After some quick research, we found that a rain barrel would supply more than enough water for our landscaping needs. We decided to act.

During our investigation, we found out that even though the earth is 2/3 water, only 3/10 of one percent is suitable for domestic use - and here we were dumping it on our plants. Flowers and trees like rain; why not give them more of it?

The first step was to get the big barrel. Some city governments appreciate folks who are lessening the city's overall water use, and you can call and get a free barrel delivered to your house. Nashville had already distributed its barrels for the year, so we turned to eBay, where we found a supplier selling used barrels that had been cleaned and were now suitable for collecting rainwater. Ours was once used to haul pickles across the ocean. As soon as it was FedEx'd to our doorstep, we were ready to go.

The barrel came complete with a how-to guide, and it was easier than I imagined to set up. A spigot attaches near the base, an overflow attachment is near the top to connect a hose, and the top has holes to collect water. A mesh screen keeps the mosquitoes away, but we also recommend getting repellent pellets to drop in the water for added protection.

To collect the water, you need to place the barrel directly in the path of a downspout on a gutter. We sawed ours in half, added a flexible run-off attachment, and aimed it at the top of our barrel. We were now ready for rain - 80 gallons of it.

Although that seems like a lot, an inch of rain on 1,000 square feet of roof can produce 6,000 gallons of rainwater. That's why you have an overflow hose. So, it rained, our barrel filled with water, and we were ready to stop using treated water on our hydrangeas and marigolds. And because we've got LOTS of water and the barrel fills again with each downpour, we can give our pretty flowers a little extra water for those hot summer days and not spend any money or use any precious resources.

By Sam Davidson





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Cool People Speak: Go Green Outside the Home

We asked and you answered. Keep reading to hear what you (and lots of other cool people like you) said about how to save energy and the environment right outside your home.

We featured a fun contest in order to give away an Eco-Me home starter kit. The contest was simple. Just tell us what you do to go green at home and a random entry will be selected to receive the prize pack.

After several entries (and one winner), we'll be sharing over the next few weeks what you shared with us. So get ready for some creativity, ideas and inspiration, from you to us to you! Here's what you do to go green outside your home:

Eileen tells us, "I ride my bike to school and work every day, and bring my green bags with me to the store."

Janice offers, "We mulch our lawn when we mow so that we don't add to the landfill. And, my husband bikes to work many days a week."

Elizabeth tell us. "My kids and I started composting this spring and by end of summer it was a HUGE pile. It's fun to show a 5 and 3-year-old composting at work! It's just in the corner of our yard and was super-easy to do!"

Jan pronounces, "We (p)recycle and compost all of our waste, and use the compost to add to our garden, which supplies about 80% of our food. We're eating healthier and more frugally, while keeping the earth clean and green!"

Deborah declares, "Everything that is compostable gets put into 'The Bin,' from shredded paper, vegetable and fruit scraps, to corn-based paper plates and cups. The worms are happy and a bunch of stuff doesn't go to the local landfill!"

Kathy reports, "We keep a covered copper pail for organic kitchen waste (peelings, cores, rinsed egg shells, etc.) that we transfer to the outdoor compost bin of grass clippings. It's easy and enhances the soil in our garden."

Sarah says, "We recycle our pet's hair clippings into the soil outside."

Beth offers up, "I have a wonderful garden at home. This year, even though we had a very

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cold spring and early summer and I was tied up fighting wildfires for a good portion of the summer, I was able to can tomatoes and pickles, freeze green beans and some tomatoes, and dry bell peppers and green onions. I also ate wonderful fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, cabbage, and asparagus. I have been gardening on and off for the past few years (depending on the early arrival and severity of fire season) but this was the first year I was able to preserve much food. It was a good year for experimentation and learning. Next year's garden will show the results of my learning."

Mary mentions, "We landscaped using native plants, leaving all of the existing trees and plants in place when we built our home. In fact, the Google Earth view shows how green we are compared to our neighbors!! We have joined the National Wildlife Backyard program in order to educate ourselves on providing natural habitats for native animals, birds and insects and we are certified. We are members of the State Park system here, and these are the areas where we spend time as a family, so that the children can see what the natural state of the land is/was. We are now buying as much organic produce as we can, checking for location of origin and trying to stay close to home. We support local businesses, opting to pay a little more for some things instead of going to big box stores. We are on the wait list for a local co-op, and of course we recycle! We hope to continue to teach our children what is really important in living life!"

John tells us, "I recycle, use an electric lawn mower, ceiling fans, a tankless hot water heater, and have efficient insulation. I upgraded my windows and planted native plants for landscaping."

Kathy says, "We use no pesticides in the yard or the house at all, and orange oil to repel the ants."

It's clear to see that our collective intelligence is powerful, inspirational, and truly capable of saving the world. Keep the good (green) ideas coming!

By Sam Davidson





The COOL Guide to Plastics

It seems like most of our life comes packaged in plastic. Take a quick minute to learn how to reduce, reuse and recycle in order to take advantage of this oh-so-convenient method of packaging.

I enjoy this conversation from The Graduate:

Mr. McGuire: I just wanna say one word to you. Just one word.

Ben Braddock: Yes, sir.

Mr. McGuire: Are you listening?

Ben: Yes, I am.

Mr. McGuire: "Plastics."

In 1967, Benjamin Braddock didn't know about plastics in general, let alone the diversity plastics offer. Today, plastics are used in every area of our lives. Have you ever noticed the numbers printed on plastic material and wondered what those numbers meant? Generally speaking, each code refers to the type of plastic the object is made of and what the object can be recycled for. Here are the properties of the seven plastic codes, provided by the American Plastics Council:

1 - Polyethylene Terephthalate (PETE, or Polyester plastics). PETE plastics are used for drink bottles and condiment bottles and can be recycled into fiber, clothing, fleece wear and other food and drink containers.

2 - High Density Polyethylene (HDPE). HDPE plastics are used for many products, including juice and milk jugs, dish and laundry detergent bottles and grocery, trash and retail bags. HDPE can be recycled into liquid laundry detergent, shampoo and conditioner bottles, flower pots, floor tiles and picnic tables.

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3 - Vinyl (Polyvinyl Chloride or PVC). Vinyl plastics have many uses including medical tubing, pipes and floor tiles. They can be recycled into loose-leaf binders, mud flaps, traffic cones and garden hoses.

4 - Low Density Polyethylene (LDPE). LDPE can be used for bread and frozen food bags and squeezable bottles, such as those for ketchup and honey bottles. These can be recycled into furniture, lumber and trash cans, among other things.

5 - Polypropylene (PP). Polypropylene plastics are used for yogurt and margarine containers and medicine bottles. These items can be recycled into brooms, rakes, automobile battery cases and even traffic lights.

6 - Polystyrene (PS). Polystyrene plastics are used to make egg cartons, cups and cutlery. They can be recycled into license plate frames, foam packing and thermometers.

7 - Other. Plastics with this code are made from a combination of the other codes. You can see this code on some juice bottles and five-gallon reusable water jugs. They commonly are recycled into new bottles or plastic lumber.

Now that you know about the different types of plastics and how they can be recycled into other products, there is no excuse not to recycle! Look for a plastics recycling spot near you and do your part to turn your life full of plastics into a life full of recycled plastics.

By Kelly Schultz





A Chat with A Farmer

Do you have any idea what the farming life is all about? From being Certified Organic to offering a CSA program, farms and farmers today are fascinating. Read this interview by Michelle Andrade as she speaks with a local farmer.

What comes to mind when you hear the word 'farm?'

Some farms are huge, while others are small. And I learned this when I sat down with Judy McGary of Doe Run Farms, who was happy to be interviewed. The first thing she said, in fact, was: "We are so happy that you will let others know about our little farm."

The farm might be small, but it's having a big impact.

Q: Besides being empty nesters, what inspired you to start Doe Run Farm?

A: We missed being close to nature after having lived a suburban life for so many years and being caught up in the hectic everyday way of life in the city. We are glad to be living a quieter way of life. Though we stay busy all of the time here on the farm, the surroundings and the pace is much different than when we worked in the city. My husband John and I grew up on farms and we always knew one day we would have the opportunity to live on a farm again. There is nothing like being able to eat from your own garden year round - which we are able to do here - and to enjoy all the wonderful things that a farm life provides.

Q: What is it like to own a farm in Tennessee?

A: Having a farm situated at the foothills of the Appalachians is like having been given a special gift. Every day you are gifted with the sight of lush green hills, an ever changing sky, flowers that amaze you with their color, the sounds of horses and cows in nearby pastures, and fresh clean air. What more could you ask for?

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Q: Do you grow strictly organic fruits and vegetables? If so, why did you choose to do so?

A: Yes, our farm is a Certified Organic farm. John just picked a couple of trays of pears from one of our fruit trees and it's comforting to me to know they have never had any chemicals used on them. The same goes for our apples in our small fruit orchard. We chose to have our farm Certified Organic, because it tells our customers that we have certain standards that we must live up to with our growing methods. We feel that it gives our farm credibility. The things that are required of us to become Certified Organic are really just things that a farmer who makes a living at farming probably does anyway.

Q: If someone wanted to buy from you, where would they go?

A: For about five years we were regulars at the Franklin Farmer's Market, but our focus now is on our CSA (community supported agriculture) program from our farm. We have more of an opportunity to get to know the families that we grow for, and they have the opportunity to get to know us this way. We like being able to visit with them when they pick up their shares. I especially like getting to meet the children.

Have you ever had a chat with a farmer? The next time you venture out to your local farmer's market, take a moment to speak to a grower. Their life and work may be much different than you think.

By Michelle Andrade





Composting 101: Turning Waste into Haste

We all know by now that eating locally and buying organic is the way to go—but even fair trade coffee produces waste that we toss into the garbage. Starting your own compost pile is a natural way to recycle that waste into something your garden will love.

When I was a kid, living in Alabama, my parents kept a compost pile at the far end of our back yard. Instead of taking out the trash (like normal kids), I carried our organic waste to the compost pile. I didn't know it at the time, but composting is an environmentally-beneficial way of recycling much of the waste we humans produce on a daily basis. Not only does it reduce the amount of waste we send to landfills, but it also provides a wonderful garden additive that provides a plethora of healthy nutrients to the soil and live plants.

The Basics of Composting

Anybody can start a compost pile without spending a lot of money. But the opportunities for composting range from do-it-yourself piles to commercially built worm-assisted bins. Compost is the end product of a complex feeding pattern involving many different organisms such as worms, insects, bacteria, and fungi. The end product is a brown, earthy, nutrient-rich substance that is found in every forest, jungle, grassland and garden on earth. Building your own compost pile will organize and hasten Mother Nature's composting process and allow you to use this earthy gold as you please.

• **Step 1: Build Your Compost Bin**

To start your compost pile you need an outdoor area to store the organic waste. For the typical residential composter, a single cubic meter of space will suffice; but you may desire more space depending on how much matter you plan on adding. A shady location is generally best since maintaining a constant level of light moisture in the pile is essential for microbial activity. And since compost does not usually smell like fresh roses, you may wish to keep it at a distance from your house or frequently used areas.

The bin itself can be constructed on your own from materials you already have access to—with few limitations. Used pallets, scrap lumber, old fence boards or even chicken wire will provide a sound enclosure for a home-made compost bin. Steer clear of treated lumber (the green stuff) because it contains chemicals (thus the term “treated”) that are harmful to organic matter—using treated lumber is

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synonymous with spraying an organic crop with pesticide. Make sure your bin has at least one side that allows for easy access to the compost pile. This allows you to “turn” the pile with a shovel or pitchfork.

• Step 2: Begin Adding Organic Matter

Once you realize how many types of everyday waste can be composted, your pile will grow in no time! Start by adding this week’s grass clippings, or the leaves you had the kids rake up on Saturday. Throw in your daily coffee grounds, egg shells and banana peels, and voila! – you have a compost pile. A simple list of what to compost and what NOT to compost will get you started, but do some more research to discover how vast your pile can become.

What to compost: grass clippings (the ones you don’t grasscycle), chopped leaves, straw/hay, fruit and vegetable peels/rinds, coffee grounds, egg shells, tea leaves/bags, shredded paper, weeds and dead plants (be sure they don’t have live seeds)

What NOT to compost: meat scraps and other fatty trash, sawdust, human and pet waste, diseased plants, chemically-treated wood products, pernicious weeds

Two great practices to use from the start are to keep the pile mixed and moist. Avoid adding large amounts of grass clippings or leaves at one time. This matter can easily clump and get matted, preventing the pile from being well ventilated. Keep the pile moist—not too wet and not too dry—in order to provide the most beneficial environment for the organisms to do their stuff. A warm pile is a sign that the organisms are hard at work.

• Step 3: Turn and Deliver

Since the organisms that decompose the material are aerobic – meaning they need lots of oxygen to thrive—it is important to turn your pile at least once every other week. Using a standard pitchfork or shovel, you want to mix the pile so that the material that is on the inside of the pile is brought to the outside and the material on the outside is moved to the inside. This will simply ensure that the entire pile is given a chance to decompose.

Once the compost looks dark brown, feels crumbly (you might have to get your hands dirty), and smells earthy, it is ready to use in your garden. Spread a layer of compost up to one inch thick in garden beds — and the finished compost will aid in air and water absorption, water drainage, and nutrient enrichment. The benefits of compost will really show in flower, herb and vegetable gardening.

By Jeff Rossini





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Watch It Grow

I've been a fan of gardening for a while – the outdoors, the look and smell of flowers, the idea of growth – it all captivates me. So, here are my quick takes on three things you can do to start or continue your garden so that it's a great thing for you and our world.

Step One: Grow Your Own Vitamin C

Believe it or not, you (yes, you!) can grow your own fruits and vegetables – and you don't even have to major in farming. Most fruits and veggies can be grown in containers on a small balcony or patio that gets a good bit of sunlight. Right now, the time is perfect to start planning a summer full of sun-ripened tastiness. Dig up some gardening info from books and Web sites, or take a class or workshop. If you have a lot of success and produce more rutabaga than you and your buddies can eat, donate your excess to local food reserves.

Step Two: The Deal with Composting

Compost is a garden's best friend. The idea of decomposed organic matter may not sound all that tasty to you, but your garden dreams about it. If you've ever let anything turn moldy in your refrigerator, you're already well on your way to learning how to make compost. Simply allow yard and kitchen waste to rot in a pile in your backyard, turning it with a pitchfork periodically, or purchase a composting system to keep the yard looking clean. Invite a few worms to help speed up the process in a method called vermiculture. An estimated 30% of an average American's household waste can be composted. It's a good way to save landfill space and make your garden happy at the same time.

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Step Three: Go Organic or Go Home

To have a beautiful garden, you really don't need ANY synthetic fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides. Organic gardening is an environmentally friendly version of gardening without synthetics, allowing nature to be an ally to your garden. Fertilize with homemade compost, which builds up the soil rather than depleting it like synthetic fertilizers do. Maintain a healthy balance of insects, and they will create more of a benefit than a burden. Control weeds with mulch, corn gluten meal, hoeing and hand-pulling rather than spraying them with harmful herbicides. Read as much as you can about the effects of organic versus conventional horticulture, and learn as many organic tips as you can to make a healthy garden and keep the ecosystem healthy as well. By following any or all of these steps, you'll be on your way to having a beautiful yard and a beautiful planet.

By Ashley Brooks





Contact Us



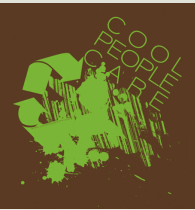
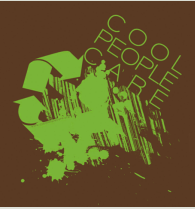
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