



THE LANDSCAPE CONSULTANTS

Your design and installation team



Gardening Organically

The goal of organic gardening is to have a balanced, healthy ecosystem. Here are a few things that you can do to have a chemical free garden. One must start with the soil, as everything must grow from the soil; it will depend on how healthy your soil is as to how well your plants will grow.

You can have a soil test done at your local Ministry of Agriculture office so you will know if there are any deficiencies or abundance of one or more elements in your soil. You can however tell a lot about your soil but just getting down and dirty with it! Run your fingers through the dirt and then take a handful and squeeze it – does it hold together? If it does then you have soil that has a good amount of organic matter in it. If it crumbles apart then you need to add organic matter such as compost to the soil.

To make sure that your soil has proper drainage, a simple water test will tell you how good your soils drainage is. Dig a hole about 1 foot by 1 foot deep and then fill it with water. If the water drains away immediately then you have very gravelly, sandy soil, which is good for drainage but will not retain much moisture for the plants needs in the heat of the summer, again organic matter will need to be added to the soil. If the water takes more than an hour to dissipate out of the hole, then the drainage is very poor in your soil, indicating a lot of clay content.

By adding sand and compost to the soil you will be able to break down the clay and create better drainage. For both sand and clay based soils the best way to improve the soil is by digging in lots of compost in the spring and top-dress the gardens in the summer and fall.

Knowing the pH level of your soil is important too, it will help you to match plants with your soil conditions – acid lovers or alkaline lovers will grow best in the conditions that they are best suited for. A soil test will also tell you if there are any soil deficiencies of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

By adding these products to the soil you will be able to balance the soil to a more neutral level.

Nitrogen – blood meal, hoof and horn meal, canola seed meal

Phosphorus – bone meal

Potassium – wood ash, kelp meal

Always remember that healthy soil and plants are less likely to have pest and disease problems, so the use of chemicals and labor is greatly reduced.

Facts

The pH scale goes from 0 to 14. Soil with a pH of 7 is neutral; less than 7 and it is acidic; more than 7 and it is alkaline. Most plants grow in the 6.5 range.

When composting remember that - green materials are rich in nitrogen; grass clippings and food waste and brown materials are rich in carbon; straw, dead leaves, and sawdust.

For best composting results you need to mix these materials in the compost bin, if you have trouble finding carbon rich material in the summer, use some shredded newspaper.

Remove insects such as spider mites and mealy bugs from your plants by blasting them with the water hose.

To keep cutworms away from your vegetable plants, remove both ends of a tin can and insert it in the soil around the plant making a collar.

Marigolds, chrysanthemums, chives, onions, and garlic repel many insects so plant these amongst your vegetable garden.