

Urban Harvest

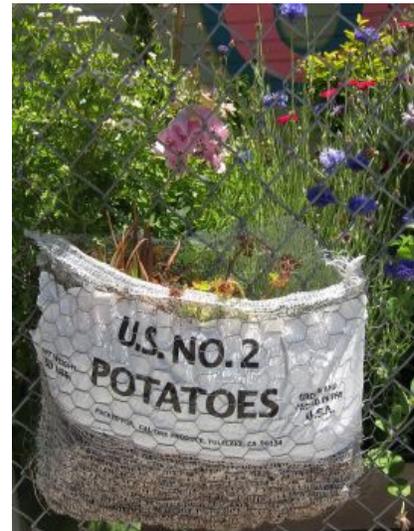
## What are Options for more Sustainable Garden Landscape?

By Chris LaChance

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For weeks, I have been avoiding looking at my garden beds and resisting the temptation to get rid of brown, frost-damaged leaves and branches when we have had a few warm winter days. As a result of winter freezes, however, we can reassess our landscapes. Now - not when the first signs of spring appear - is the time to think about making our landscapes more sustainable whether we choose to replant perennials, shrubs and trees or start a vegetable garden.

Although the word sustainable is applied to many things from sustainable development to forestry and more, we more often hear it in the context of the environment. Here our discussion will focus on the sustainable landscape.



The sustainable gardener recycles a potato sack to make a planter.



Salvia Indigo spires helps attract pollinators.

A simplistic description might be an organic landscape with the added benefit of protecting natural resources and creating a healthy environment for people. I like to interpret it in terms of adopting a mindset or way of living. When we garden sustainably, we work with nature, not against her. It is a way of looking toward the future and leaving things better than when we started. Too often our need for instant

results gets in the way of any forward thinking. Above all, we do no harm.

To move toward sustainable landscaping, we can take several steps, with all of them being ultimately interrelated. The goal, as described in the collaborative effort of the U.S. Botanic Garden, [American Society of Landscape Architects](#) and the Lady [Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#) called the American Sustainable Sites Initiative, is to "protect, restore and enhance the ability of landscapes to provide ecosystem services that benefit humans and other organisms." Although this may seem very lofty, it is certainly attainable, and many gardeners already are on the path to sustainability.

When creating the design, the sustainable gardener considers many resource-conserving principles that achieve the least negative environmental impact. Attention is paid to enrich soil, make wise plant choices, conserve water and protect water quality. Landscape structures are made from recycled, environmentally friendly building materials.

Composting is the ultimate in garden recycling and can be viewed as a cornerstone of sustainability. Creating compost, that rich organic matter that is the result of microbes and microorganisms breaking down garden waste and kitchen scraps, means less of these will end up in landfills. When incorporated into landscape beds, vegetable gardens, or raked into lawns, compost builds healthy soil.



New plantings need adequate space for growth.

Care is given to choose plants, primarily native plants, that are well-adapted to soil and climate conditions. In the sustainable landscape, care is taken to insure proper spacing of plants. This is where forward thinking is essential. Research a plant to not only discover its light and moisture requirements, but also its mature size.



Plants can attract native pollinators and other beneficial insects that are natural predators of garden pests.



A diverse selection of native plants can include edible plants that can be incorporated along with perennials

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