



## Best Practices for Healthy Garden Care

THIS HANDY CHECKLIST, designed as part of the **Phipps Sustainable Landcare Services** program, will give you or your land care provider a way to ensure you're using best practices in your garden and landscape. The Phipps Sustainable Landcare program and curriculum, modeled after the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) Organic Land Care Standards, propose methodologies for soil ecology, site analysis and design, organic pest management and more.

- **PLEDGE to garden without the use of synthetic fertilizers or pesticides (including herbicides, fungicides, etc.)**  
Following sustainable practices will help you create a healthy garden without the use of synthetic amendments.
- **MATCH plant needs to the existing sun and soil conditions of your yard.**  
Learn the sun and shade qualities of your yard and understand the soil type in order to buy plants that will work for these areas. Start by selecting plants that will grow well in the current conditions of your yard.
- **SELECT healthy plants that are pest and disease resistant.**  
When visiting local nurseries, be sure to pick out plants that are vibrant and healthy. Read the labels and look for plants with pest or disease resistance.
- **CHOOSE native and sustainable plants.**  
Plants native to southwestern Pennsylvania are adapted to our local soil, climate conditions and wildlife. Find Phipps' Top 10 Sustainable Plants at [phipps.conservatory.org/Top10](https://phipps.conservatory.org/Top10). These plants are selected by staff for their minimal watering and fertilization needs, non-invasive habits, and their resistance to disease and insects.
- **FEED the soil by adding compost and mulch around plants.**  
These natural fertilizers will feed the soil microorganisms and provide micronutrients that all plants need.
- **TEST the soil and talk to a professional if you see problems with your plants.**  
A soil test will tell you the pH of your soil along with information about needed nutrients.
- **WATER plants well the first year and monitor them in subsequent years.**  
Trees need 10 gallons each week during the growing season for every 1 inch of trunk diameter at time of planting. Perennials like an inch a week. Once established, they should not need watering unless there is a bad drought.
- **REDUCE weeds by planting a dense layer of groundcovers, herbs and shrubs.**  
Covering the soil with plants will minimize the weeds that come up. If weeds start to come in, cut them back before they go to seed and be careful not to disturb the soil, which can open up areas for more weeds to grow.
- **ENCOURAGE beneficial insects to visit by using native plants, having a variety of plants and leaving the leaves for overwintering insects.**  
These strategies which will increase the amount of beneficial insects, which will act as natural pest control.
- **SAVE fall clean up for the spring!**  
Pollinators and beneficial insects will find homes in your dead leaves and plant stems over the winter. Plus, seed heads provide food for birds. Save the garden clean up until spring when critters are active and moving again.

**NEED HELP?** Hire a Sustainable Landcare Accredited Professional who has completed training and pledged to garden sustainably. View our complete list of professionals at [phipps.conservatory.org/Landcare](https://phipps.conservatory.org/Landcare)

