



Cascade Water Alliance Turf Out!



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Introduction

Turf Out: A Homeowner's Guide to Diversifying Your Pacific Northwest Landscape Through Turf Removal

This guide will help you create a fantastic, pesticide-free garden where there was once only grass. It will help you plan and create a beautiful garden you'll enjoy for years to come.

Turf Out, Garden In!

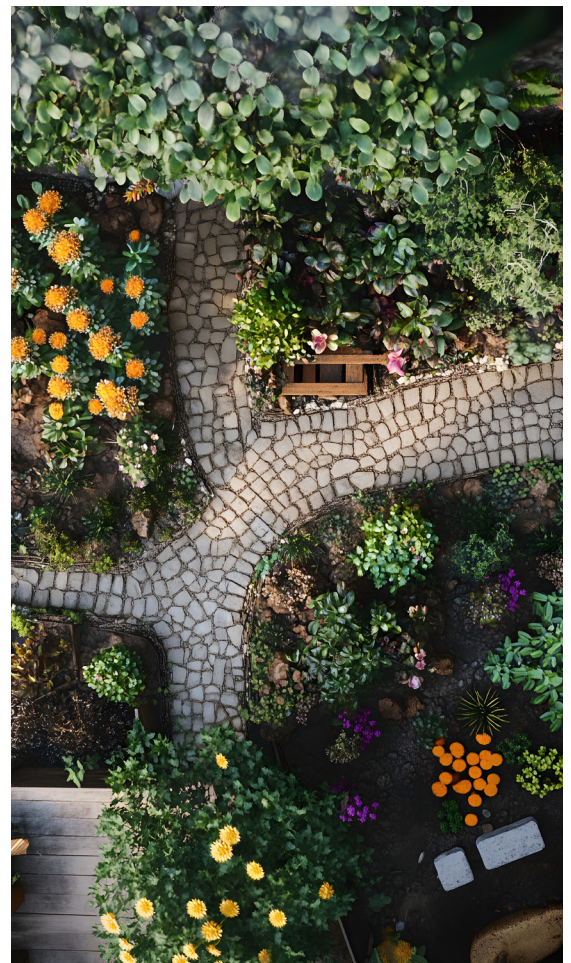
If you want to help pollinators, wildlife, people, and the planet, it can be as simple as removing some turf on your property and replacing it with ornamental and native plants, such as trees, shrubs, and groundcovers.

Grass lawns are an ecological wasteland with little biodiversity or life. When grass doesn't measure up to expectations, the common response is to apply more water, fertilizers, and poisons to try to fix it. The US Environmental Protection Agency estimates that nationwide about 9 billion gallons of water are used every day in our landscapes. Lawn soils are often so compacted they can't absorb rainfall or irrigation water, so the chemicals we apply are tracked into our homes and flow into our waterways during rain events.

Alternatives to Turf

Are you ready for something better? Join the growing movement of people who are removing their lawns and planting gardens featuring regionally adapted plants that benefit people and the planet.

Imagine how wonderful your yard could be with beautiful plants instead of all that boring grass. You could make a rain garden or other stormwater feature. You could grow native plants or a vegetable garden. You could help pollinators or grow drought tolerant species. You could release yourself from hours of noisy, polluting lawn mowing. If you can dream it, you can have it!



How Much Should Go?

Removing turf is a big project, and you may not be ready for the whole yard to go all at once. Some grass is good, even desirable. Grass is cooler than bare soil or buildings, and lawns are great for parties, play areas, and pets. Grass paths that lead through your garden can accentuate garden features and invite exploration. And with Natural Lawn Care practices, you can have healthier grass that stays green longer and doesn't require much water or fertilizer. So you'll want to think carefully about which parts of your lawn you want to remove as you develop your plan.

Timing

When should you plant? There are two planting seasons – spring and fall. You can plant in early spring while plants are still dormant. These plants will need care and watering through the summer. Unpredictable conditions such as heavy rains, extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and frost can be hard on new transplants. Fall may be a better time to plant since the weather is mild and rainfall will take care of the watering. Throughout the winter, roots will grow and develop so plants have a head start the next spring. Either way, your new garden will need lots of TLC for the first few seasons.

For Fall planting, consider this timeline:

- Winter — Design and plan.
- Spring — Remove turf and amend soil.
- Summer — Build features, dig swales, and install irrigation lines.
- Fall — Plant and mulch.

Guidelines and Precautions

This guide is intended for people who want to do most of the work themselves. The suggestions herein are for a typical Pacific Northwest residential lot that is mostly level with good drainage. Seek professional advice before removing your lawn if you have steep slopes, drainage or ponding issues, or live next to a stream or lake. Check with your Homeowner's Association and your city or county for any relevant zoning restrictions. Without good planning, you may create a serious problem like flooding, landslides, or extreme erosion.



Find a Pro!

Consider working with a professional landscaper to develop a plan and create the garden of your dreams.

[Find an ecoPRO – Ecoprocertified](#)





Here are tools and materials you may need for your project:

Tools

- Spade
- Shovel
- Garden fork
- Steel rake
- Trowel
- String trimmer
- Hand pruner
- Stakes and string
- Floating row cover

Plants

- Trees
- Shrubs
- Vines
- Perennials
- Annual flowers and vegetables
- Ground cover
- Pond or bog plants

Hardscape

- Rocks
- Stepping stones and walkways
- Raised bed boxes
- Containers
- Decking
- Fencing and posts
- Trellises
- Arbors

Soil, Compost, Mulch

- Soil planting mix
- Compost (bags or bulk)
- Arborist's wood chips
- Straw or leaves

Professional Services

- Designer
- Tool and truck rental
- Sod removal
- Irrigation system (removal or installation)
- Additional labor
- Delivery fees
- Shipping costs

Watering and Irrigation

- Garden hose that is drinking water quality safe
- Ball valve
- Water breaker
- Watering can
- Timer
- Sprinkler
- Bubbler
- Soaker hose
- Drip lines
- Channel lock wrench
- Hose clamps
- Replacement swivels
- Gaskets
- Combo or socket wrench



Plan Your Project

It's tempting to just start digging and planting without a plan in place. This can end up creating an expensive, unattractive weed pit with dead plants and a lot of wasted time, effort, and money.

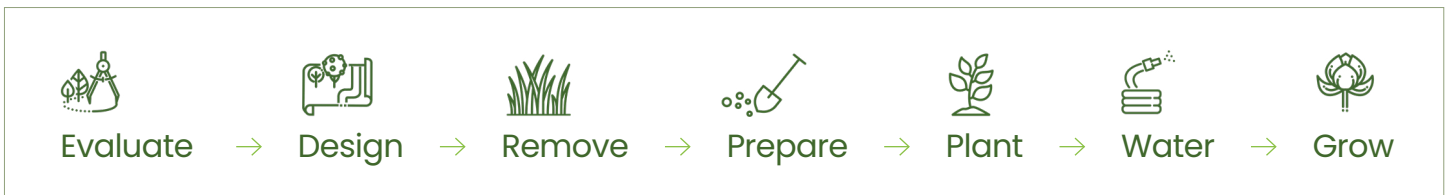
The time you invest in planning, designing, and preparing your project increases the likelihood of having a garden that will enhance your property for years to come. You'll know the best place for higher maintenance plants so they can be easily cared for, and you'll identify your yard's microclimates so you can put the right plant in the right place. Planning and designing your garden takes time, but it will make a BIG difference to the end result.

Write down the goals for your new garden. Are you planting for pollinators and wildlife? Will you grow food? Do you want to slow and filter stormwater? Do you want a garden that is beautiful, colorful, and easy to maintain? It's important to think all these things through before removing any turf.

Consider the scope and labor. Will you do it yourself or find help? If you are new to gardening, starting small is best. As you develop your gardening skills you can add more garden space over time.

Get inspiration and fresh ideas by walking around your neighborhood to scout plants and design ideas. Visit demonstration gardens, take classes, and read books. Attend garden tours and join clubs or associations. Tap into social media to find like-minded folks who share free plants, seeds, and gardening advice. It may seem overwhelming, but you can do this.

Think about the process in the following steps:





Evaluate

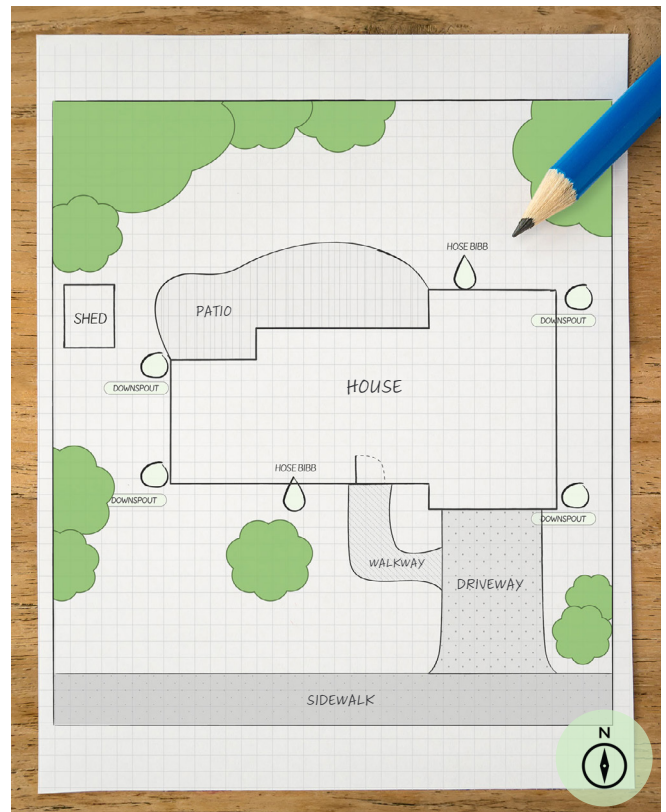
Site Map

Carefully evaluate all aspects of your property. This will provide you with invaluable information to start the design process. The initial assessment will become the foundation of your project.

Start your evaluation by creating a site map. On this map, draw all of the permanent elements on your property.

Draw the map to scale. Grab some graph paper, a long tape measure, and a friend. Go outside and start measuring and drawing your site map. Include structures, driveways, sidewalks, trees, perennial plants, fences and patios.

When the map is finished, walk around your property and check for anything that is missing. Be sure to include hose bibs and downspouts. Refine your map until it seems just right, and then trace the final rendition with a fine tip pen. Make several copies and use them to evaluate your site and design your plantings and other landscape elements.



Using scaled graph paper can help you visualize your project. It will help you understand how much available space you have to work with.



Try an Online Mapping App

Draw a rough sketch by looking up your address on an online mapping tool. Zoom in, print, and then trace over all the permanent things such as buildings, and hardscapes. Trace the edges of tree and plant canopies.

Microclimates

Landscapes succeed when plants and garden elements are in the right place. Evaluate the sun, soil, water, and air to identify your yard's unique microclimates and add them to your site map.

Sun

Evaluate May to August. Check the area every hour and tally the hours of sunlight.

- Full sun is 6+ hours.
- Part shade is 3-6 hours.
- Full shade is 0-3 hours.

Soil

Dig some sample areas around your lawn. Is the soil hard, loose, moist or dry, dark or soggy?

Water

Locate all hose bibbs and downspouts. Think about how you will get water to your plants. Does water pond during heavy rains? Is there room for a stormwater feature?

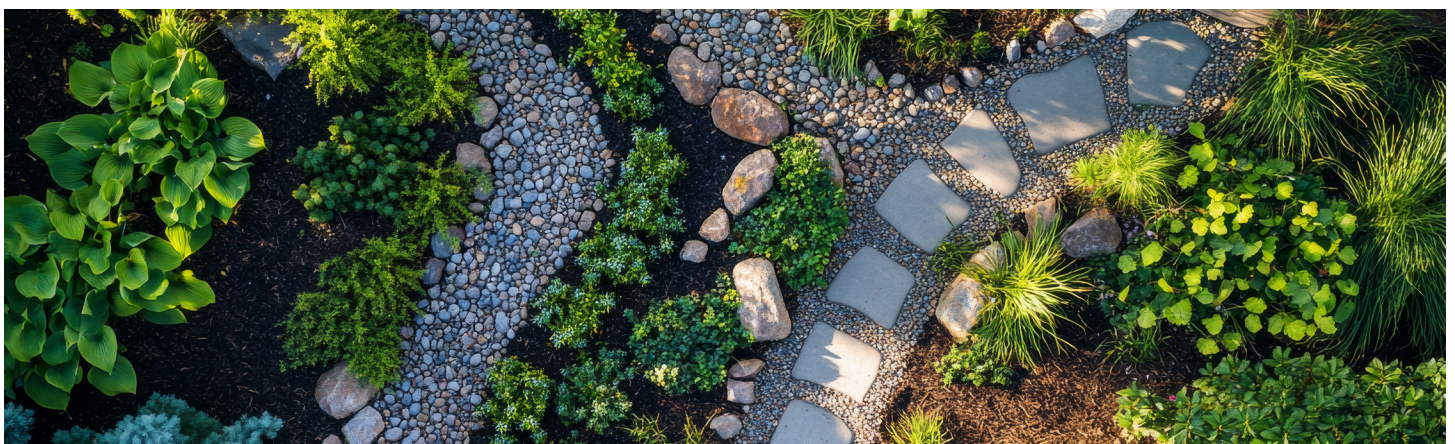
Air

On a calm day, notice wind channels around the yard, especially between buildings. New plants will need extra care to get established in windy spots.

Now that you have a better idea of your yard's microclimates – warm and sunny, cool and shady, dry and windy, wet and cold – you can carefully match these conditions with plants that will thrive there.



Don't forget to include existing, established trees and landscape areas you intend to keep. Consider how these elements will interact with the new landscape. Include neighbors' trees that affect your property. Plant with mature size in mind to prevent overcrowding.



Landscape Zones

To determine the best place for your new garden, consider how you use your property. Landscape zones tell how people and wildlife use the spaces and where to place garden elements so they are in the best location. Landscape zones are based on how frequently you use the space and what you do there. Mark the landscape zones on a blank site map.

Zone 1 ●

Outdoor living space. Great for high needs plants such as container gardens, seedlings in pots, kitchen gardens, annual herbs and flowers, and a gathering space or outdoor kitchen.

Zone 2 ●

Outer edge of outdoor living space. Great for edible perennials like fruit trees or shrubs, rhubarb, berry vines, artichokes, a chicken coop or rabbit hutch, compost bins, and garden sheds.

Zone 3 ●

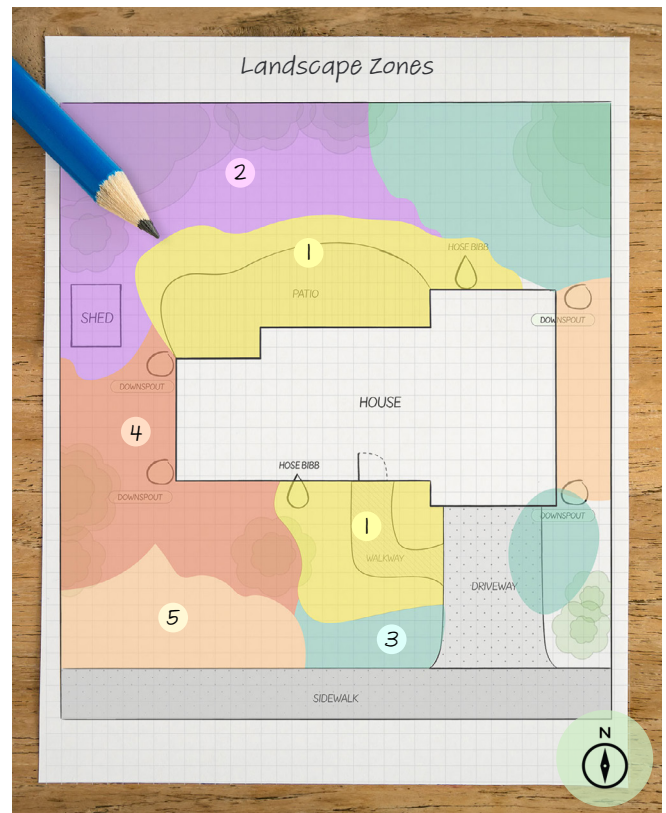
Moderate use for large scale farming or perennial flowers. Great for large vegetable gardens, perennial flower beds, orchards, canes, and vines.

Zone 4 ●

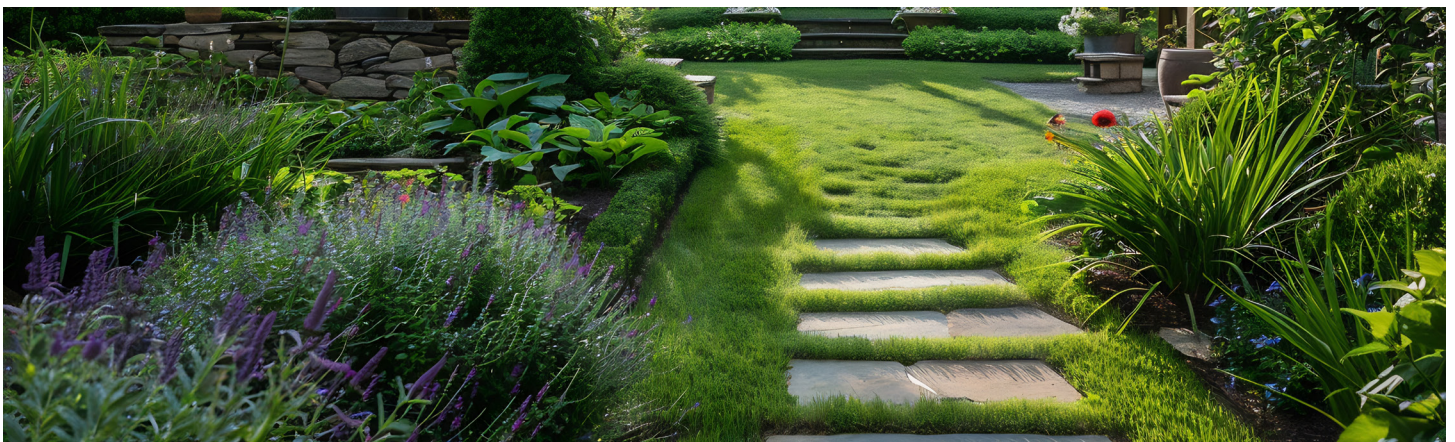
Minimal use and minimal care. Great for native and drought tolerant plants, perennial flowers, and pollinator patches.

Zone 5 ●

Seldom used. Great for a wild, untended area for wildlife.



Consider how people and animals use your property throughout the year. Plan your garden around play areas and pet activity.





Design

After evaluating your site, you will have a better idea about what kind of garden or plant goes in each zone. Now it's time to design your ideal garden space. Let your imagination run free!

Start Your Vision

Draw all your design ideas on the site map. Include pathways or other hardscapes like walls, raised beds, or patios. Put a pollinator patch beside a patio. Plan a kitchen garden in a sunny Zone 1 spot. Slow stormwater with a berm or rain garden. Make notes about how you will get water to plants. Design from the inside out. Look at your yard from inside the house, what would you like to see from the window?

Arrange the elements so you don't see the whole yard at once. Your landscape will be more interesting with curved lines and plants that limit the view. A winding path invites discovery as it leads to hidden garden rooms and verdant spaces.

Make plant lists for the different microclimates. Work on one microclimate at a time, and make sure plants will grow in the USDA Hardiness Zone where you live. Look for regionally appropriate plants that thrive in the Pacific Northwest. Identify species that fit in small spaces and include trees, shrubs, perennials, and groundcover plants. Make notes about size and shape, height and width, fast or slow growing, and any special considerations.



Garden Elements to Consider

- Pathways
- Water features
- Outdoor living areas
- Stormwater features
- Kitchen gardens
- Arbors
- Pet and play spaces



Be FireWise

If you live in an area that is prone to wildfires, incorporate FireWise planting techniques to better protect your home. See Resources section to learn more about creating a FireWise landscape plan.



Plant Layout

Arrange the plants in layers from groundcover to canopy. Provide space for plants to grow wide and tall. A tree with a 12-foot mature height could grow to 24 feet or more with enough time. Draw stems or trunks as a circle on your site map and the expected canopy size. Plant in clumps or drifts rather than straight lines or predictable patterns. Group two or three different species in clusters and vary the arrangement and number of plants. Leave gaps between clumps to imitate natural landscapes.

Garden Types and Plant Choices

You can have many different types of gardens. Landscaping with native plants is an easy way to support wildlife with species from the Pacific Northwest. Drought tolerant plants, once established, need very little water and just a little mulch each year to thrive. If your yard is shady, utilize plants that thrive in low light conditions.

Pollinator-friendly gardens support wildlife and help improve water quality. These plantings help build soil, reduce pesticide use, and create habitat for bees, butterflies, and birds. Grow food by planting edible perennials and making a kitchen garden. You aren't limited to just one kind of garden. All these garden types can work together so long as you put the plants in the right place.



Stormwater and Drainage

Stormwater is typically not treated like wastewater (sewage). Stormwater drains directly into local rivers, streams, and lakes carrying significant amounts of pollution, which is harmful to people, fish, and other wildlife.

Rainwater runs off compacted lawns and into drains overwhelming stormwater systems. It also washes lawn chemicals and excess fertilizers into our waterways. Move water away from your home's foundation and capture it so that it can absorb into the soil. To slow and capture stormwater, consider adding contours to your landscape.

On level yards, rainwater often washes out to the street. Create rain gardens, swales, and berms that can move water away from your house into more absorbent soil. Check with your local jurisdiction about rain garden programs.





Remove

When the design is complete, it's time to get your hands dirty and your brow sweaty. Remember, if the turf isn't completely eliminated, it will likely grow back. Grass can be a terribly persistent weed, so take your time on this step and be sure to get it right. Don't forget to call before you dig.

Technique #1 – Fast Turf Removal

Remove turf by hand or by machine and start planting straight away. Before you remove grass, make sure you are ready to begin the next step soon. Bare soil will quickly sprout weeds creating more work and problems, so be ready to plant SOON after turf removal.

Turf Removal by Hand

Digging turf by hand is great for small areas or to expand existing planting beds. Before you grab a spade and start digging, mow the grass low and remove clippings; they add weight to the sod pieces. Check soil moisture as moist soil is easier to dig. Mark the area then cut the perimeter with a spade or half-moon edger. Cut a strip that is one to two spade widths. Now lift and slice with spade until the sod strip is loose then remove it. Repeat this process until you've removed all the grass in the planned garden space.

Turf Removal by Machine

If digging your turf by hand is too difficult, consider renting a sod cutter or hiring a company that specializes in sod removal. A sod cutter is best for large, open areas, and you'll need a truck or trailer to haul it to and from the rental shop. It is a thing of beauty to watch a sod cutter in action. After the sod is cut, you can roll it up into bales and remove it. Keep sod bales small so they are easy to lift.

Edge

If you remove sod along sidewalks, patios, or driveways, grade your soil so that the mulch will stay put. Remove the soil to approximately 6" deep and 12" wide, then make a slope from the yard level to a low point along the hardscape.



Sod Disposal

What will you do with all that sod? Small amounts of sod can be placed in curbside compost bins. Larger amounts can benefit your landscape because composted sod makes excellent soil. Use it to create berms and elevated planting beds. Flip sod pieces so roots face up and stack into a pile or berm. Water each layer thoroughly. Cover the sod with 8" - 10" of soil or wood chips to make a garden bed.



SAFETY IS IN YOUR HANDS.
EVERY DIG. EVERY TIME.

DIAL 811 Before You Dig!

Technique #2 – Slow Turf Removal

If you have time, you can eliminate the grass slowly through solarization or mulching. These techniques work in small or large spaces to get rid of grass with a little effort, some materials, and a lot of time. It can take four to nine months to remove sod this way, so include that into your planning schedule. Consider putting down the layers in winter or spring and planting in the fall. When the grass is dead, you are ready to plant. Use one of these methods to remove grass slowly:

Solarization

Mow the grass as low as you can. Next, dig a 3"- wide trench along the edge of the area to slow the encroachment of grass and weeds. Lay a heavy-duty non-biodegradable sheet, such as 6-mil black plastic, over the area. Tack down the plastic sheet with landscape staples. When the grass is dead and the roots look lifeless, remove the plastic sheeting and prep the soil for planting.

Sheet Mulch

Another classic technique to remove turf slowly is called sheet mulching. Mow the grass very short and dig a 3"- wide trench along the boundary. Place biodegradable sheets of OMRI-listed landscape paper over the area. Moisten the paper and cover it with 6" - 12" of wood chips. When the grass is dead, you're ready to plant. The wood chips will stay in place, just move them aside before digging any holes for new plants.

Alternatively, you can cover the landscape paper with 8" - 10" of soil and start your garden right away. To plant, cut through the paper to make a planting hole, remove turf, add one inch of compost to the hole and transplant your new plants.

Deep Mulching

Eliminate the grass with deep mulching. This is similar to sheet mulching but it forgoes the use of biodegradable sheets. First, mow and string trim grass to bare earth. Next, pile 12" or more of wood chips over the space. Then, water the wood chips and wait until they have settled. Now add more wood chips so they are at least a foot deep. After several months, the grass will be dead. You can move the wood chips aside and dig planting holes.





Prepare

No matter what type of soil is on your property, you can improve it by adding organic matter such as mulch or compost. Microorganisms will move from the soil to the organic layer and back into the soil. These microbial movements can help break up and lighten heavy compacted soil like magic!

Mix in Compost

Add compost once or twice a year. Use homemade compost or purchase it in bags or bulk. Good compost looks and smells like rich soil, and it has a light and crumbly texture. Look for compost products with the OMRI or WA Organic Certification.

In Existing Beds:

- Mix 1" - 2" of compost into the top 6" - 8" of soil.
- Spread 1/2" - 1" of compost around perennials.

In New Beds:

- Mix 2" - 4" of compost into the top 6" - 8" of soil.
- Spread 1/2" of compost around plants for weed control.

You can improve any type of soil with compost. So mix in some compost, and you're ready to take the next step in making your dream garden!



What's OMRI?

Organic Materials Review Institute is an international nonprofit organization that determines which products are allowed for use in organic agriculture. Look for an OMRI label on potting soils, fertilizers, and other gardening products.



Compost Calculator

Figure out how much compost or mulch is needed for your project with Cascade Water Alliance's [Compost Calculator](#).



Soil Testing

Most King County residents can get five free soil tests through the [King Conservation District](#) with custom recommendations for how to improve your soil.



Plant



Now that you've amended the soil in your planting area, pick a good day to plant your garden. To make the transition successful and less stressful on the plants, transplant perennials in spring or fall when the weather is mild and rain will provide most of the necessary water. Annual vegetables, flowers, and herbs can be planted in spring, summer, and fall but will require consistent watering throughout the summer.

Ready, Set, Plant!

The best time of day to transplant is in the morning or evening during cool, cloudy days when rain is in the forecast. Your transplants will need a thorough watering as soon as they are in the ground. Consider watering your transplants with diluted seaweed extract. Potassium rich seaweed extract will help your plants take up nutrients more quickly and reduce transplant shock.

Gather your tools, plants, compost, and seaweed extract. Check to ensure the soil is moist but not soggy. While the plants are still in their pots, arrange them according to your plan. Double check spacing to give the plants room to grow. Spread 1" of compost across the planting area and mix it into the top 6" - 8" of soil.

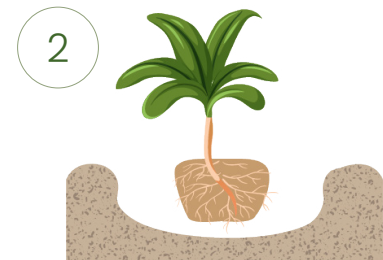
Dig planting holes as deep as the container and two to three times as wide. Leave the subsoil undisturbed. Check and adjust hole depth; it should be the same depth as the pot or the root flare. Carefully remove the plant from the container and loosen the roots. Spread the roots out and place the plant in the hole. Double check the depth. Backfill around the plant, and gently but firmly compress the soil.

Spread 1" of compost around the planting area. Arrange any planned drip irrigation lines or soaker hoses so they're distributing water to the plant roots. Water the transplants with diluted seaweed extract. Spread mulch around plants; no fertilizer is needed for perennials. Maintain a mulch-free zone around all stems and trunks.



Dig Hole

Use pot to measure size of plant hole (2-3x as wide)



Plant

Gently remove from pot, loosen roots, place in hole



Cover and Water

Backfill the hole and water thoroughly

Mulch for Success

All the plants in your landscape will benefit from a little mulch. Spread leaves, woodchips, or grass clippings around plants, and cover any bare soil. This carpet of organic matter feeds microbes, improves soil quality, increases water retention, suppresses weed seeds, protects plant roots, and looks great!

For mulching around trees and shrubs, use a woody material like wood chips or conifer needles. Use a lighter material, like deciduous leaves or grass clippings, around vegetables and flowers. Spread a thin layer of finished compost across any garden bed.

Spread 3" - 12" of mulch around new plantings. Create a donut of mulch around plants with a 3" - 6" wide mulch-free zone around the stem or trunk. Spread mulch to the drip line or the outer tips of the branches where roots are growing and taking up water and nutrients. Make sure the mulch-free zone stays clear.



Mulches to Use

- Wood chips
- Wood shavings
- Conifer needles
- Deciduous and evergreen leaves
- Straw
- Grass clippings
- Finished compost

Mulches to Avoid

- Non-organic or rubber mulches
- Material sprayed with pesticides or herbicides
- Beauty bark
- Shavings from stained or laminated wood



Need Wood Chips?

Wood chips are shredded tree branches and limbs. They are full of microbes and organic matter ready to improve your soil as they decompose. There is a nationwide service called [Chip Drop](#) that connects arborists who have too many wood chips to gardeners who need them.





Water

A successful garden, especially with annuals and new plantings, relies on consistent watering. All transplants, even natives and drought tolerant plants, will need supplemental water for the first three seasons. Vegetables and annual flowers will need water throughout the growing season. Every garden is unique, so how long and how frequently you water will vary.

Water Wisely

Water slowly and gently. Try to apply water at the same rate as the soil absorbs it, like a gentle rain shower. A timer will help you from overwatering. Water consistently; each plant needs one to two gallons of water per week spread over two to three applications. Water in the morning or evening for better uptake and less evaporation. Water the soil and not the plants. Limit overhead watering, and instead use soaker hoses and drip irrigation lines to reduce evaporation and deliver water efficiently to plants.

Keep it Leak-Free

Water can be destructive and expensive so monitor for leaks and fix them right away. Even a small drip can waste hundreds of gallons of water and increase your water bill.



FREE Cascade Gardener Classes!

Sign up for Cascade Water Alliance's free gardening classes from local experts on a variety of topics from sustainable gardening to irrigation, pest control, and more.

[Learn more at Cascade Gardener](#)





Grow

Your plants are in the ground, so now it's time to grow your garden! All your perennials, whether they are native, drought tolerant, or edible plants, will need care and water for the first three seasons to get established and off to a great start. For the first three years, focus on the following activities, and your garden will be the envy of the neighborhood!

Visit Frequently

This is one of the easiest yet most overlooked actions you can take to help your garden thrive. As you visit your plants, you will learn more about them and how they grow. Visit often, monitor plants, check soil moisture, watch for any signs of stress, and take prompt action if you spot problems.

Weed and Mulch

Thorough weeding and mulching in the spring and fall will keep things looking good. Drip irrigation and carefully watering the root zones can reduce weeds. Spread a thin layer of compost to cover bare soil and suppress weeds. Grow thick groundcovers that crowd out weeds.

Prune Gently

Unless you are growing fruit trees, your new landscape won't need much pruning for several years. Bad pruning can damage plants, so prune gently. When pruning for size or to remove storm damage use a thinning cut. Travel down the branch to be removed and cut it off where it meets the trunk or limb. Prune off spent flowers or old seed stalks.



Water

Your landscape will need supplemental water from May through September. Use a timer, and water in the morning or evening before the heat and wind increase. Give each plant one to two gallons of water per week for the first two years. For year three and beyond, water as needed throughout the hottest summer periods and let rainfall do as much of the watering as possible.

Enjoy!

This is the best part. Enjoy watching your new landscape grow and change as some plants flourish and others wane. You'll see what thrives and what doesn't do so well. Embrace this guidance from nature and imitate whenever possible. Observe wildlife and spread the word to your community. Most of all... enjoy your new garden!



Plant Guide

Recommended Trees	Sun	Part Shade	Shade	Deciduous Evergreen	Native Pollinator Drought-Tolerant Edible Medicinal	Rain Garden Zones	Tree Sizes Small: up to 30' Medium: 30'-70' Tall: more than 70'
Black Elderberry <i>Sambucus nigra</i>					P, E, M	1, 2, 3	Medium, pink flower clusters
Blue Elderberry <i>Sambucus cerulea</i>					N, P, E, M	2, 3	Medium, flowers are used for tea
Chinese Red Birch <i>Betula albosinensis var. septentrionalis</i>					P, DT	3	Medium, striking bark
Cornelian Cherry <i>Cornus mas</i>					P, DT, E	2, 3	Small, delicious fruit
Douglas Fir <i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>					N, DT, E, M	3	Large
Hazelnut <i>Corylus avellana</i>					E	3	Medium
Honey Locust <i>Gleditsia triacanthos f. inermis</i>					DT	2, 3	Medium, fantastic foliage
Mountain Hemlock <i>Tsuga mertensiana</i>					N, DT	3	Small, good for urban spaces
Osoberry <i>Oemleria cerasiformis</i>					N, P, E	2, 3	Small, dark blue edible berries
Pacific Crab Apple <i>Malus fusca</i>					N, P, E	1, 2, 3	Medium, small fruit
Pacific Ninebark <i>Physocarpus capitatus</i>					N, DT	1, 2, 3	Small, red peeling bark
Paperbark Maple <i>Acer griseum</i>					DT	3	Small, red peeling bark, winter interest
Paper Birch <i>Betula papyrifera</i>					N, DT	3	Medium, good for narrow spaces
Garry Oak <i>Quercus garryana</i>					N, DT	3	Small, very adaptable
Rough Bark Maple <i>Acer triflorum</i>					DT	3	Small, fall color
Western Serviceberry <i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>					N, E	2, 3	Medium, small if grown in shade
Shore Pine <i>Pinus contorta var. contorta</i>					N, DT	3	Large, good for narrow spaces
Silk Tassel <i>Garrya elliptica</i>					P, DT	2	Medium, long silver catkins in winter
Vine Maple <i>Acer circinatum</i>					N	2, 3	Small, fall color
Weeping Alaska Yellow Cedar <i>Xanthocyparis nootkatensis</i>					DT	3	Large, good for narrow spaces
Western Yew <i>Taxus brevifolia</i>					N, DT	3	Medium, soft needles, hedge plant
Witch Hazel <i>Hamamelis × intermedia, h. virginiana, h. mollis</i>					M	3	Small, needs good drainage, fall and winter blooms

Recommended Shrubs	Sun	Part Shade	Shade	Deciduous Evergreen	Native Pollinator Drought-Tolerant Edible Medicinal	Rain Garden Zones	
Black Chokecherry <i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	☀️	☀️		🌳	P, DT, E	2, 3	Edible berries in fall, very adaptable
Bay Laurel <i>Laurus nobilis</i>	☀️	☀️		🌲	DT, E, M	2, 3	Slow growing, keep small in a container
Bear's Breeches <i>Acanthus mollis</i>	☀️	☀️	☁️	🌲	P, DT	2	Spiny, summer dormancy
Black Twinberry <i>Lonicera involucrata</i>	☀️	☀️	☁️	🌳	N, P, DT, M	1, 2, 3	Yellow flowers and dark purple berries
Blueberry, Highbush <i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i>	☀️	☀️		🌳	E	2	Needs acidic soil, delicious berries
Evergreen Solomon's Seal <i>Disporopsis pernyi</i>		☀️	☁️	🌲	P, DT	2	Stunning in the landscape, protect from slugs in spring
Goumi <i>Elaeagnus multiflora</i>	☀️	☀️		🌳	P, DT, E, M	2, 3	Highly adaptable, early bloomer, nitrogen fixer, June berries
Grapes <i>Vitis var</i>	☀️			🌳	DT, E	3	PNW favorites: buffalo, canadice, van burien, vanessa, venus
Hardy Fuchsia <i>Fuchsia magellanica</i>	☀️	☀️	☁️	🌳	P, E	2	Favored by hummingbirds
Hardy Kiwi <i>Actinidia arguta</i>	☀️	☀️		🌳	E	2, 3	Need male and female plants, small, smooth fruit ripen in September
Hops, Common <i>Humulus lupulus</i>	☀️			🌳	E, M	2	Climber, requires summer water
Hydrangea <i>Hydrangea var</i>		☀️	☁️	🌳	P	3	Beautiful flowers for arrangements
Labrador Tea <i>Rhododendron groenlandicum</i>	☀️	☀️		🌲	N, E, M	1, 2	Leaves are used for tea
Mock Orange <i>Philadelphus lewisii</i>	☀️	☀️		🌳	N, P	2, 3	Upright growth, ideal for narrow spaces
Ocean Spray <i>Holodiscus discolor</i>	☀️	☀️		🌳	N, P, DT	2, 3	Dazzling creamy white flower plumes
Orange Honeysuckle <i>Lonicera ciliosa</i>	☀️	☀️	☁️	🌳	N, P, M	2	Drought tolerant when grown in shade
Pacific Coast Rhododendron <i>Rhododendron macrophyllum</i>	☀️	☀️		🌲	N, DT	2, 3	Good for narrow spaces
Red Flowering Currant <i>Ribes sanguineum</i>	☀️	☀️		🌳	N, P, E	2, 3	Fantastic spring blooms, good for narrow spaces
Red Osier Dogwood <i>Cornus sericea</i>	☀️	☀️		🌳	N	1, 2, 3	Bark offers fall / winter colors
Russian Sage <i>Perovakia atriplicifolia</i>	☀️			🌳	P, DT	3	Silver foliage and profusion of purple flowers
Smoke Tree <i>Cotinus var</i>	☀️			🌳	DT	3	Burgundy foliage, great smokey flower plumes
Snowberry <i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	☀️	☀️	☁️	🌳	N	2, 3	Highly adaptable, captivating white berries
Strawberry Tree <i>Arbutus unedo</i>	☀️	☀️		🌲	DT, E	3	Can be arborized for small tree, red berries are ripe in late fall
Sweet Cicely <i>Myrrhis odorata</i>	☀️	☀️	☁️	🌳	P, DT, E	2, 3	Deep taproot, deadhead flowers to keep seeds from spreading
Tall Oregon Grape <i>Berberis aquifolium</i>	☀️	☀️		🌲	N, P, E	2, 3	Year-round color, early bloomer

Perennials, Grasses, and Groundcover	 Sun	 Part Shade	 Shade	 Deciduous Evergreen	Native Pollinator Drought- Tolerant Edible Medicinal	Rain Garden Zones	
Bunchberry <i>Cornus canadensis</i>					N	2	Groundcover
Cardinal Flower <i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>					P	1, 2	Great bog plant, striking deep scarlet blooms
Catmint <i>Nepeta vars</i>					P, DT	3	Silver foliage, large plumes of purple flowers
Chinese Astilbe <i>Astilbe chinensis</i>					P	2	Long lasting flower spikes, many colors available
Common Blue Violet <i>Viola sororia</i>					E	2	Spreading groundcover
Common Camas <i>Camassia quamash</i>					N, P, E	2, 3	Deep blue flower clusters, staple food of the Salish people
Coral Bells <i>Heuchera sanguinea</i>					DT	2, 3	Groundcover, dark leaved varieties can handle full sun
Daylily <i>Hemerocallis fulva</i>					P, E	2, 3	Edible flowers, many colors to choose from
Deer Fern <i>Blechnum spicant</i>					N, E	1, 2, 3	Perfect for a damp shady place
Elecampane <i>Inula helenium</i>					P, M	2, 3	Large sword-shaped leaves, towering flowerstalks with wild yellow blossoms
Everygreen Huckleberry <i>Vaccinium ovatum</i>					N, E	3	Slow growing, glossy dark green leaves, tasty berries
False Lily Of The Valley <i>Maianthemum dilatatum</i>					N, E, M	2	Spreading groundcover, spring blooms
False Solomon's Seal <i>Smilacina racemosa</i>					N, DT	2	Stunning in the landscape, white pendulous flowers
Feverfew <i>Tanacetum parthenium</i>					P, DT, M	2, 3	Miniature daisy-like flowers, will grow just about anywhere
Foamflower <i>Tiarella trifoliata</i>					N	2, 3	Groundcover, showy white flowers
Fringecup <i>Tellima grandiflora</i>					N	2, 3	Groundcover, delicate pink flowers
Goat's Beard <i>Aruncus dioicus</i>					N, P	1, 2	Not favored by deer
Hardy Cyclamen <i>Cyclamen coum</i>					P	2	Groundcover, fall / winter bloomer
Hardy Geranium <i>Geranium macrorrhizum</i>					P, DT	3	Groundcover, lovely purple and pink flowers
Hellebores / Lenten Rose <i>Helleborus var</i>					P, DT	2	Winter blooms
Hot Lips Salvia <i>Salvia microphylla</i>					P, DT	2, 3	White flowers with red tips, a delight in a border planting
Hyssop <i>Hyssopus officinalis</i>					P, DT, M	2, 3	Deep blue flowers, great border plant
Jerusalem Sage <i>Phlomis fruticosa</i>					P, DT, E	2, 3	Curious flowerstalks with yellow flowers filled with sweet nectar, perfect for sipping
Kinnikinnick <i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>					N, DT	2, 3	Groundcover, red berries
Lady's Mantle <i>Alchemilla mollis</i>					P, DT, M	2	Fast growing groundcover, spreads
Lavender, English <i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>					P, E, M	3	Also French, Spanish, and other lavenders, great for flower border
Lemon Balm <i>Melissa officinalis</i>					P, DT, E, M	2, 3	Leaves smell like lemon, great for herbal tea
Love In A Mist <i>Nigella sativa</i>					P, DT, E	2, 3	Self-sowing annual, many colors available

Perennials, Grasses, and Groundcover	 Sun	 Part Shade	 Shade	 Deciduous Evergreen	Native Pollinator Drought- Tolerant Edible Medicinal	Rain Garden Zones	
Low Oregon Grape <i>Berberis nervosa</i>					N, P, E	2, 3	Glossy leaves, yellow flowers and blueberries
Mondo Grass <i>Ophiopogon japonicus</i>					DT	2	Dense planting can choke out weeds
Nodding Onion <i>Allium cernuum</i>					N, P, DT, E	2, 3	Groundcover, deer resistant
Oregano <i>Origanum vulgare</i>					P, DT, E, M	2, 3	Spreading groundcover, purple or white flower clusters
Oregon Stonecrop <i>Sedum oregonum</i>					N, DT	3	Groundcover, good for rockery, highly adaptable
Pacific Bleeding Heart <i>Dicentra formosa</i>					N, P	2, 3	Delicate foliage, delightful heart-shaped pink flowers, early bloomer
Pearly Everlasting <i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i>					N, P, DT	3	Silver foliage, clusters of white pearl flowers
Piggyback Plant <i>Tolmiea menziesii</i>					N	2, 3	Groundcover
Plantain Lilies <i>Hosta</i>					DT	2	Groundcover, deer love this one
Porcupine Grass <i>Miscanthus sinensis</i>					DT	2, 3	Also called chinese silver grass, distinctive light purple seed plumes
Rhubarb <i>Rheum rhabarbarum</i>					DT, E	2, 3	Stunning in the landscape, delicious in pies
Rosemary <i>Salvia rosmarinus</i>					P, DT, E	2, 3	Hardy and delicious, blue-purple flowers a beloved by people and pollinators
Rush, Taper-Tipped <i>Juncus acuminatus</i>					N	1	Many rush varieties for swales and rain gardens
Sage <i>Salvia officinalis</i>					P, DT, E, M	2, 3	Classic culinary herb, beautiful as a border plant
Salal <i>Gaultheria shallon</i>					N, E	2, 3	Glossy dark green leaves, fruit make delicious syrup
Sea Kale <i>Crambe maritima</i>					P, DT, E	2, 3	Large dark green, glossy leaves with white flowers
Shasta Daisy <i>Leucanthemum × superbum</i>					P, DT, E	2, 3	Easy to grow, great cut flowers
Slough Sedge <i>Carex obnupta</i>					N	1, 2	Many sedge varieties for swales and rain gardens
Sweet Box <i>Sarcococca ruscifolia</i>					P, DT	2, 3	Winter blooms, heavenly fragrance
Sweet Woodruff <i>Galium odoratum</i>					P, DT, M	2, 3	Groundcover, can out-compete many weeds
Sword Fern <i>Polystichum munitum</i>					N, DT	2, 3	Large fern, great for a shade garden
Thyme <i>Thymus vulgaris</i>					P, DT, E	2, 3	Well suited to mingle among a flower bed, easy to grow in a container
Variigated Japanese Sedge <i>Carex oshimensis 'Evergold'</i>					DT	2, 3	Many sedge varieties for swales and rain gardens
Western Maidenhair Fern <i>Adiantum aleuticum</i>					N, DT	2	Delicate foliage, small fern
Western Red Columbine <i>Aquilegia formosa</i>					N, P	2, 3	Delightful red and yellow flowers
Western Trillium <i>Trillium ovatum</i>					N, DT	2	Distinctive three-petal flower, perfect for woodland planting
Wild Ginger <i>Asarum caudatum</i>					N	2, 3	Groundcover, not edible
Wintergreen <i>Gaultheria procumbens</i>					E, M	2	Groundcover
Woodland Strawberry <i>Fragaria vesca</i>					P, DT, E	2, 3	Groundcover, less aggressive than beach strawberry
Yarrow <i>Achillea</i>					P, DT, E, M	2, 3	Fantastic umbrella flowers, comes in many colors



Resources



Cascade Water Alliance is a municipal water provider in King County, Washington serving 405,000 residents and 20,000 businesses with safe, reliable drinking water. Cascade encourages everyone to use water wisely and protect our water resources.

Learn more by visiting cascadewater.org

Composting & Soil Testing

- [Washington State University Extension Backyard Composting](#)
- [King Conservation District Soil Testing](#)

Drought Tolerant Plants

- [Washington State University Extension Drought Tolerant Landscaping for Washington State](#)

Fire Wise Planting

- [Washington State Department of Natural Resources](#)

Garden Questions

- [The Garden Hotline—Ask a Question](#)
- [UW Center for Urban Horticulture—Gardening Help](#)
- [WSU Master Gardeners King County—Gardening Help](#)



Irrigation & Saving Water

- [US EPA WaterSense](#)
- [King County Department of Natural Resources](#)
- [Washington State University](#)
- [Cascade Water Alliance](#)

Natural Lawn Care

- [King County](#)
- [Oregon State University Extension Climate Friendly Lawn Care](#)
- [Oregon State University Extension Moss Management](#)

Pest Control

- [Washington State University Extension Hortsense](#)
- [Oregon State University Integrated Pest Management](#)
- [University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources](#)
- [University of California Integrated Pest Management Natural Enemies Gallery](#)

Plant Lists

- [Great Plant Picks from Elizabeth Miller Botanical Garden](#)
- [King County Native Plant Guide](#)
- [Plants For A Future Edible Plant Database](#)
- [USDA Plant Database](#)
- [Washington Native Plant Society](#)

Rain Gardens & Stormwater Landscaping

- [Rain Garden Handbook for Western Washington](#)
- [King County RainScapes: Natural Rainwater Solutions](#)



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