

Our Yard

- Start a garden. One of the greatest impacts an individual can have is to start a garden. Even a few containers can provide quite a yield. Try to garden as organically as possible. Fewer toxic chemicals will make their way into the environment.
 - If you don't grow all the vegetables you need, sign up with a CSA to support our local farmers rather than going to the grocery store.
 - Try organic seeds.
- Exchange plants with your neighbor if you have too many of something.
- Protect the insects. Many insects in our yard are beneficial and should be welcomed. It is also important to establish biodiversity to keep everything in balance.
 - To protect the insects that winter beneath the leaves in our yards, do not rake them all up in the spring until it is warm enough for them to survive.
 - On the other side, leave a few leaves in the yard for the winter.
 - Avoid the use of pesticides. If you must use them, read the labels carefully and choose the organic solution whenever possible. Use good bugs such as ladybugs, lacewings, praying mantis.
 - It is critical to avoid neonicotinoids. These chemicals are harming our pollinators. It is not only important to avoid the use of these but also to avoid buying plants that have been treated with them. At Caras in Missoula, they can identify plants they have that they know have not been treated with neonicotinoids.
 - Add compost to your soil not only for your plants but for the insects, etc. that inhabit it.
- Avoid weed killers.
 - Persistence and solutions of commercial strength vinegar and limonene works well to control weeds as does the old-fashioned method of pulling them up.
- Compost or participate with a local composting facility/service. In Missoula you can deliver compostables to Garden City Composting, Soil Cycle, or have Recycling Works pick up compostables weekly. Soil Cycle does not have a mulcher so cannot take large branches, etc., but they do redistribute compost to members. The attached link lists 50 items that can be composted but it is important to check with your composting facility if you are not doing the composting yourself.
 - Paper napkins, paper towels, egg cartons (pizza boxes), cardboard with food stain can be composted.
 - You can put your vegetable/fruit kitchen scraps in the blender with water, dig a little furrow around your plants, pour the mix in, cover with soil.
 - You can simply bury things such as banana peels.
- Add plants that attract pollinators and that are necessary in their lifecycle. You can obtain information about plant types and how to design your pollinator garden from the Missoula Insectarium and the Missoula County Extension Service.



**Taking a more active
role as Creation
Caretakers**

- 70% of native bees live in the ground making it very important to reduce the use of chemicals and pesticides in our yards and nourish the soil with natural ingredients.
- Incorporate as many organic practices as you can in your yard/garden.
- Replace sections of lawn with ground covers (bees love groundcovers). This reduces the water requirements, helps control erosion, cuts down on the use of gasoline powered lawn mowers. Some possibilities include creeping herbs such as thyme and oregano, creeping Jenny, Buffalo Grass, Clover.
- If you do have grass, consider switching to an Eco Mower.
 - The old fashioned push mowers are still available and good for small spaces. If you keep the blades sharpened, they cut well.
 - Go electric. Fueled by rechargeable batteries, most models cut and mulch just like the gas-powered ones.
 - Adjust the blades to 3 - 3.5 inches to increase the surface area for photosynthesis.
 - Use a mower with a mulch setting so you can mulch the clippings back into the lawn.
 - Fertilize naturally. Use compost, not chemicals.
- Add mulch around plants. It helps control the soil temperature and can reduce water requirements.
- Connect rain barrels to your downspouts and capture water for your garden.
- Consider adding a rain garden.
- Water during the coolest part of the day when more water can seep into the soil, less evaporation.
- While waiting for your water to heat up, collect that cold water in jugs or pitchers and use it to water your plants.
- Plant a tree.
 - If you don't have space for a tree, there are "green" companies that plant trees from proceeds from sales. Zero Waste Cartel, Save Lands, Plant Change are a few you can check out.
 - Support organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and Arbor Day Foundation
- Mosquito control. Instead of sprays, attract birds and bats. Blue Jays and Purple Martins eat mosquitos during the day and bats are voracious mosquito exterminators. Plant native plants with berries, get a bird feeder, install a bat house.

Following is a list of a few (out of many) helpful websites:

<https://www.marthastewart.com/1536174/eco-friendly-backyard-care>

<https://www.ecohome.net/guides/3402/grass-lawn-alternatives-eco-friendly-bee-friendly>

<https://www.washingtonian.com/2018/05/04/rain-garden/>

<https://www.hgtv.com/outdoors/gardens/planting-and-maintenance/10-ways-to-green-your-garden-for-earth-day>