



The Climate Change Garden



10 ways to make your garden more resilient to a changing climate

Our gardens are going to experience more topsy turvy weather in the coming years and this will be challenging. We all need to be prepared for successes and failures, but there are approaches that we can take in our gardens to make them more resilient to the changes ahead.

So here are 10 ideas to help you

1. **Look after your soil** - it is absolutely key to the resilience of your garden and therefore top of our list. We are both no-till gardeners and not only does this method save time in the garden but it is so much better for the environment overall. Every time you turn soil, you expose it to the atmosphere and carbon is released as CO₂. Not only this but your precious soil structure is damaged in the process as disturbing soil disrupts the amazing network of fungal hyphae that runs through it. Tilled soil holds less water, less soil life and weed seeds are brought to the surface where they germinate. So, take the no-till approach. Every fall cover your soil with a couple of inches of compost (or mulch) to give it a feed and essential winter protection.
2. **Mulching** – this is so important, especially in dry months, as it protects the soil from the sun, traps the water in the soil and reduces the need to water. You can mulch with all sorts of materials: your own compost, wood chip, hay, sheep wool, straw, cardboard, fallen leaves etc. Gravel is a great mulch too, which is why gravel gardens are amongst the most drought resilient.
3. **Compost as much as possible** – we call it closed loop gardening. All the garden 'waste' is recycled through the compost heap to create the compost for your no till beds. Don't forget you can add kitchen scraps and cardboard (without the tape and staples).
4. **Avoid peat** – peat is one of the world's most important carbon stores. Peat forms over thousands of years and sequesters vast amounts of carbon. When peat is dug from the ground to use in gardens, the carbon is released back in the atmosphere where it adds to climate change. It is vital that peat stays in the ground and gardeners use some of the many peat-free alternatives.
5. **Diversity in the garden** – having good diversity is one of the quickest ways to making your garden more resilient and we're not just thinking about insects and birds. You need a mix of different types of plants too - annuals, perennials, climbers, trees and shrubs etc. You also want diversity in the crops you grow. Don't forget to grow a mix of varieties too – if conditions don't suit one variety perhaps another will be successful. Another way to boost biodiversity is to make sure there are flowers for as much of the year as possible. This will really support the pollinators and predators. By having a good diversity of predators, the need for pesticides is eliminated as natural control will take care of everything.
6. **Right plant in the right place** – never has this been so important. Those of us experiencing increasingly hot, dry summers are looking to drought tolerant plants. Once they get going, these plants hardly need watering, but remember they are not always happy

with warm, wet winters as they don't like 'wet feet', so they need free draining soils. If you don't have that, perhaps use a raised bed so they have good drainage.

7. **Save water** – this is essential for your garden, but as water becomes an increasingly scarce and expensive resource, make sure you harvest as much as possible from roofs and other surfaces in your garden – garages, sheds etc so make sure you have plenty of rain barrels and even underground water storage tanks, plus water features to hold the water and dipping ponds.
8. **Prepare for heavy rain** – with six locations in the US receiving more than 6in of rain in 24 hours during 2022, it is time to think of how your garden can cope with excess rain and how you can help to hold back the water for as long as possible, so less water flows into drains and causes localised flooding. Think permeable. Make sure the surfaces in your garden – the paths and patios for example - are permeable so water passes in the ground, rather than running off into the drains.
9. **Lawns** – is it really necessary to have a lawn? They need mowing and watering so are very demanding. If you simply have to have a lawn, think about the grass species that you grow as some are more drought tolerant than others. But a much better idea is to have a wildlife friendly lawn with lots of different low growing flowers or a clover lawn that's brilliant for bees.
10. **Zero waste** -eliminate single use plastics / bags / plant pots etc in the garden and reduce your carbon footprint by reducing, reusing and recycling. As well as helping the planet it builds your confidence which in turn helps you make more informed decisions as a climate change savvy gardener.

Happy growing

Kim and Sally

The Climate Change Gardeners

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