



New Gardeners: A How-To Guide to a Healthy Yard



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
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Start with Healthy Plants

When choosing garden seedlings and greenhouse perennials:

- avoid the biggest, lushest plants, especially if they're exploding with blooms. While flowering plants look prettier, blooming takes a lot of energy that the plant will need when it is transplanted. It's better to choose unflowered plants—they will bloom better in your garden.
- look for plants with the most balanced root to plant size ratio, good branching patterns, and healthy leaves.
- Check for signs of insects or pest damage. If your plant has been affected, it could spread to other plants in your garden as well.

Zones

Check the plant tag for the recommended climate zone, which describes the coldest temperature range a specific perennial can typically survive in. Under the most recent Agriculture Canada zone maps, Saskatoon is classified as zone 2b; however, with a warming climate and the shelter provided in urban settings, some zone 3 plants will succeed. Anything marked zone 4 or higher is unlikely to survive our winter, but can still be used as an annual like Geraniums. Plant tags tend to underestimate plant hardiness for our area, so experiment!

Sunlight

Generally speaking, the more sunlight for plants the better. Check the plant tag for recommended sunlight requirements:

- **full sun:** six to eight hours of direct, unfiltered sunlight every day.
- **partial sun:** the plant will tolerate less sunlight and would prefer four to six hours of direct sunlight daily.
- **shade:** these plants are more likely to burn in long periods of direct sunlight and prefer lightly filtered shade, such as near an elm tree. Most plants are unlikely to survive under a spruce tree due to lack of water and little sun.



Watering

- All plants need water, especially when first planted.
- Water plants immediately after planting and continue to water frequently for the first few years until root systems have been established.
- Established perennials, especially those that are drought-tolerant, may not need to be watered.
- For lawns, a good soaking of one inch per week is better than frequent shallow watering.
- Water only as needed. Over watering can decrease the health of your plants and lawn.

To learn more about water conserving garden practices, view our *Rain Barrel and Low-Water Gardening How-To Guides*.





Mulch

Mulch is critical for a healthy perennial bed and helps to prevent many problems.

- Add a four to six inch layer of shredded post peelings, wood chips, or fallen leaves to the top of your flowerbed soil. This will reduce weeds, lower watering needs, and provide a healthy ecosystem for ladybugs and other beneficial insects.

To learn more, view our *Mulch & More: A How-To Guide*.

Soil

Depending on what area you live in, Saskatoon and area has a range of soil types, from sand to silt to clay. All soil types benefit by adding compost.

- If you're planting a new bed, add a three to five inch layer of compost and mix it into the soil.
- Adding 1–2 inches of compost every year will keep your soil healthy.

To learn more, view our *Compost Bins: A How-To Guide*.

Preventing Problems

Pests are more likely to attack unhealthy plants. Like your body, if you naturally keep your garden fit, it can fight off all sorts of pests and diseases on its own.

- **Choose the right plant** for the right space to keep stress at a minimum.
- **Healthy soil and a thick layer of natural mulch** go a long way in creating a healthy garden ecosystem.
- **Ensure plants aren't crowded** to improve access to nutrients and increase airflow, which will help keep diseases at bay.
- **Avoid pesticides** so that natural insect predators stay safe. These beneficial insects can take care of the harmful insects that show up. To learn more, view our *Pesticide Free Gardening: A How-To Guide*.
- **Rotate where you plant your vegetables** each year to prevent the soil from becoming depleted of nutrients and to control soil-borne diseases.



Solving Problems

Identifying the problem is the first and most important step to finding a solution. For example, spraying pesticides to kill leaf rollers is counterproductive; by the time you see rolled-up leaves, the leaf rollers have probably moved on. Not only that, but a healthy tree isn't usually damaged by leaf rollers, making the use of pesticides unnecessary.

From May until September, you can call the University of Saskatchewan Gardenline at **306.966.5865**, or email **gardenline@usask.ca** for one-on-one advice. Information is also available online at: agbio.usask.ca/community-resources/gardenline

Gardening at the U of S

For gardening classes for the beginner through to certification, go to gardening.usask.ca. Take a class, join a free horticultural tour, or enrol in our Gardening 101 series to walk you through your first year.

City of Saskatoon

Having a healthy yard and garden benefits you and your community. For tips on water conservation, backyard composting, pesticide reduction, and more, visit saskatoon.ca/healthyyards.

Questions?

Get free, local gardening advice from the University of Saskatchewan's Gardenline at gardenline.usask.ca year round. During the growing season contact a horticulturist for personalized advice at gardenline@usask.ca.

Community gardening can be an excellent option for every type of gardener, particularly those with limited garden space. To join an existing community garden, or to start one yourself, visit: chep.org/en/programs/community-gardening.

Grow a Greener Saskatoon