



BACKYARD BOUNTY

ARTFUL ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES

Caring for your new garden

A garden is a living, growing and changing space. Unlike a newly decorated room, your garden will look its best after a few years as soils improve, plant roots anchor in the ground and plants settle into their new space. Over the next 3 years, your garden will be in an establishment period- plants tend to settle in over year one, grow slowly in year two, and begin to look like they've always been there by year three.

Like people, plants are affected by their environment and can be challenged with diseases, bugs and animals, bad storms and weeds. Healthy, well cared for plants, can handle many challenges, so your goal is to minimize stress on plants in your garden's early years.

Here's a quick guide for what to expect and how to care for your plants and garden:

Watering:

Quantity: Plants need about 1.5" of water a week. New plants in their first season, plants in soil that drains quickly or are located under a tree or on a slope require more watering- we suggest 2" for these plants, especially during hot summer spells. We recommend you use a rain gauge so you can measure how much rain has fallen on your garden. If it does not rain at least 1.5" of water in a week, be prepared to water your garden.

Frequency: Better to water deeply 1-2x/week than mist on a daily basis- this approach will encourage plants to send their roots out in search of water. A good way to know how long to water with a sprinkler is to leave the rain gauge in the garden while you run the sprinkler and time how long it takes for the rain gauge to fill to 1". Soaker hoses usually need to run about 1 hour before an inch of water is released. ***Be careful:*** overwatering can cause as many problems as under-watering.

Timing: Water in the morning so that dew left on leaves can dry during the day. Excess moisture on the leaves, especially during stretches of high humidity, can increase the risk of infection and disease.

Equipment:

An oscillating sprinkler to cover large beds. [Gardena](#), [Ace Hardware](#). Check the coverage size and ensure it is sized commensurate with your new garden bed.

A soaker hose to cover narrow beds: [Gardena](#), [Ace Hardware](#). Depending on your water pressure, runs of 25FT may be better than 50FT

Observing:

Spend time getting to know the plants in your garden. Watch out for yellowing leaves during the growing season which may be a sign of over-watering, and for wilting leaves which may indicate a plant is drying out. Notice if a storm has broken off branches or a pest is munching away on your plant. If a squirrel or chipmunk is digging holes, especially around small, sensitive plug plants, simply tuck the soil and mulch back into place. Many times, plants will be able to overcome these environmental challenges, but if you are concerned, call or email.

Mulching:

We have mulched your garden with shredded pine bark mulch or arborist wood chips. Mulch helps soil



BACKYARD BOUNTY

ARTFUL ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES

retain moisture and helps keep weeds down. When re-applying mulch, avoid shredded hardwood mulch, except in rain gardens. Backyard Bounty does not recommend the use of treated or dyed mulch in your garden. In big storms, you may experience 'mulch movement' or see water paths through garden beds. This is normal in new gardens as plants have not had a chance to spread and settle in their roots BB designs gardens with dense ground layers ("green mulch") to minimize the need for mulch once the garden is mature, and the dense ground layer in place of mulch will also minimize mulch movement over time.

Fertilizing:

We recommend a natural fertilization program for your garden: fall mulching with leaf mulch and an annual application of compost tea will keep your plants vigorous and help them combat pests and disease. Other fertilization is rarely necessary if you use natural cycles and products to feed your soil and plants. During the site analysis portion of the design process, Backyard Bounty took a sample of soil from your garden and sent it off to a lab for testing. Based on the results, your designer then selected plants suitable for your conditions. As such, your garden should not require nutrient fertilizer beyond what naturally accumulates in the soil.

Weeding:

Don't be surprised when weeds show up in your new garden. While we've pulled visible weeds at installation, it is likely that weed seeds remain in the soil and may sprout in the new growing season. Long term, improving the soil in your garden through yearly topdressing with compost, and a full ground cover layer will suppress weeds. Here are a few common weeds that we see in new gardens and suggested approaches to managing them:

- Maple and other trees seeding in the garden: When you see the 'helicopters' start to fall from the Maple trees in the area, it is time to pull out an electric blower and blow these seedlings out of garden beds before they settle and root. Maple seedlings will happily start to root in mulch as well as soil, so a mulch layer alone will not keep them in check. Pull any young plants as early as possible if you don't get the 'helicopters' out with a blower.
- Yellow Nutsedge: This is a weed that looks like a grass. It is a perennial weed, meaning it does not die after a season. It reproduces primarily by underground tuber called nutlets, that form at the end of underground stems, called rhizomes. Remove it by digging out as much of the root and tuber as possible. This weed will begin to emerge in April or May and thrives in the heat of summer, so pull it as early in the season as possible and take care to remove as many rhizomes and nutlets and as you can.
- Lesser Celandine: Starting in early spring, smother area with ~8 inches of woodchips. The following year after lesser celandine has gone dormant, replant.
- Hairy Bittercress: A winter/summer annual, harvest the young greens to eat, or at the very least, cut the flowering stalks to prevent re-seeding.
- Dandelion: Remove the taproot when the soil is moist and loose.
- Henbit: Harvest for your dinner plate when tender, or pull as needed.
- Chickweed: Harvest for your dinner plate when tender, or pull as needed.

River Rock Swales:

River rock swales protect your soil from the erosive power of concentrated stormwater flow. While stone reinforced swales do an important job of stabilizing soil to prevent erosion, they may collect debris, organic material and seeds from other parts of the garden.

If you would like to keep your rock swale free of plants, we recommend that you regularly blow out the



BACKYARD BOUNTY

ARTFUL ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES

river rock swale with a handheld battery-operated blower. Additional organic measures you can use to control plant growth in your swale include using horticultural vinegar or a flame weeder.

Plants ultimately want to cover any open surface, so you can alternatively embrace this principle of plants filling in cracks and let our natives self-seed in your swale. Backyard Bounty often plants our rock swales for this reason. As the plants grow and establish, they will also help to stabilize the soil and you'll have chosen plants between the cracks and less weeding to do.

Sod:

With your new instant lawn, you don't have to wait for green blades of grass to sprout but you do have to tread lightly until the roots establish. Light foot traffic on your new lawn is fine after the first week. However, keep heavy equipment off the lawn for a month while the lawn begins to root.

Mowing: Avoid mowing your new lawn while the soil is saturated and soft- best to wait about 2 weeks before you begin mowing. Set your mowing blade for 3-3.5". It is fine to leave clippings on the lawn, but not if they leave mats of grass- a mulching mower that leaves fine clippings evenly distributed on the grass is ideal. Note that you may see the seams after installation, but they will disappear as the turfgrass grows and settles in.

Lawn requires several inputs to keep it looking great, including adding amendments to maintain the proper pH and level of organic matter in the soil. Most importantly, water once a day for the first week after installation to ensure consistent moisture. During the second week, water every other day, and by the third week, water twice a week as you would your ornamental plants.

Please let us know if you are interested in our Organic Lawn Care Program!

Water Features:

What a lovely addition to your garden! Keep in mind that water can evaporate faster than you think. You may need to top off the fountain with water from the hose at least once or twice weekly, especially in hot, dry and windy weather. Keep leaves and debris out of the feature. For the pump, if it's not on a switch, you may wish to unplug it during the winter, or perhaps leave it on! Even if you power it down over winter, we suggest leaving the pump in the feature since the risk of freezing is very low.

Critters:

Deer don't always read the list of plants rated 'Deer Resistant'- When deer are starved and your garden is on a deer route, you may notice that deer eat plants they might not normally eat- There are a variety of deer sprays approved for organic land care- many made from rotten eggs- so the smell is not great. We are particularly frustrated by deer eating new growth on shrubs and trees that they will not eat once the plant has matured and the branches have become tougher. Installing a barrier like a net draped over the shrub, or spraying the plant until the stems mature can prevent this type of damage. Rabbits eating away at the garden- many deer repellants effectively repel rabbits also. Barriers with fencing dug into the ground so rabbits can't burrow underneath are the best long term way to keep rabbits out.

Deer and Animal Repellent:

[Bobbex Animal Repellent](#) (We recommend the Ready-To-Use Spray for most homeowners.)
[Bobbex Deer Repellent](#)



BACKYARD BOUNTY

ARTFUL ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES

And the Good Stuff:

In addition to the beauty of a variety of new shrubs, grasses and flowers, your garden provides food and shelter for birds and butterflies and helps to keep polluted stormwater from entering our streams and the Chesapeake Bay. We hope you'll have lots of time to enjoy the flowers birds and butterflies that begin to visit and live in your yard.

Thanks for hiring us,

The Backyard Bounty Team