



How Does Your Garden Grow?

Ah, the signs of spring: birds chirping, flowers blooming and a garden desperately needing your attention. Now's the time to get the area around your home in peak condition with a few simple steps.

1. Care for soil. If possible, avoid walking on soil in established gardens. Every step compacts the soil, and that makes it difficult for roots to grow. Create paths between rows or in beds, or place a board on the soil adjacent to

areas where you work to distribute your weight more evenly. Also avoid working the soil when it's wet — otherwise, once it dries, you'll wind up with big clumps of hard-packed soil. And finally, don't overwork the soil; good soil should have particles of varying sizes and shapes.

2. Mulch generously. Mulch suppresses weed growth, maintains soil moisture, stabilizes soil temperature and more. Grab a nice big bag and mulch to your heart's content.

3. Water wisely. Don't water frequently for only brief periods of time. Doing so causes plant roots to hover near the soil surface. Instead, deep soak each time you water to encourage roots to grow deep into the soil. If possible, water early in the morning so plant leaves have a chance to dry during the day. That will help minimize fungal diseases.

4. Go native. According to experts, native plants tend to be easier to grow, have fewer pest and disease problems and require less supplemental watering. To learn more about native plants in your area, visit your favorite nursery or contact your local master gardeners' group.

5. Minimize maintenance. Cut back on fertilizers and prune only when necessary. Pruning and fertilizers cause plants to produce tender, succulent growth, which is what bugs prefer.

Source: HGTV.com

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DID YOU KNOW

60 percent

of Americans agree that spring is the best time to rid their homes of dirt and clutter, according to the 2006 Soap and Detergent Association Spring Cleaning Survey.



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