Spring Garden Planning Tips

Create a Garden Plan in Late Winter/Early Spring

Taking time to plan your garden with consideration for varying climate conditions will help to conserve water – and save time and money.

Before shopping for plants or seeds:

* Take stock of the zones in your yard and choose plants that will tolerate the various conditions: hot/sunny, cool/shady, moist, dry, etc. For example, if you have a hot, dry zone, carefully select plants that can endure hot, dry conditions.
* Wherever possible, choose plants that are [drought-tolerant and native](https://plantnative.org/ground-cover-plants-to-grow-in-utah.htm) to our area, to reduce water use by up to 50%.

Mulch and Compost:

* Add organic matter such as peat moss, [compost,](http://www.compostjunkie.com/easy-composting.html) and grass clippings to improve soil structure and help with water retention.  Incorporate organic matter 12”-18” deep into the garden beds.
* Once planting spread mulch around the base to help retain moisture.
* Mulch flowers, shrub beds, and trees with pine bark mulch.
* Use hay or newspaper (no color pages) for your vegetable gardens.
* Plant ground covers, such as creeping phlox, creeping thyme or Utah seedum also prevent evaporation around established shrubs and ornamental trees.
* [Learn how to make a simple compost bin](https://www.younghouselove.com/younghouselovedotcompost/)

Watering Your Garden:

Sprinklers and hoses aren’t very efficient ways to water a garden because much of the water evaporates before it ever reaches the roots of the plants. Consider trying one or more of these methods:

Rain barrels are useful even for smaller gardens.

* Place the rain barrel under your downspout, on a base or on bricks/cinderblocks, so that it’s easier to get a watering can underneath the spigot, and to create some water pressure.  Multiple rain barrels can be connected together for maximum water saving. Most rain barrels hold 55 gallons of water. It is legal to [collect rain water in Utah](https://utahrivers.org/rainharvest). You can get on a [waiting list](https://form.jotform.com/221105719134043) to buy up to 2 (Salt Lake County). Earlybirds qualify for a nice discount.
* Use drip irrigation or soaker hoses for shrubs, gardens, and plant beds.
  + Drip irrigation consists of a series of nozzles that deliver small quantities of water at low pressure directly to the root zones of plants.
  + A soaker hose is a canvas or rubber hose with perforations. It is most effective when it lies on top or slightly below soil level and mulch is placed over the soil and hose.
* Redirect downspouts toward plants or shrubs. Use flexible downspouts for a more controlled flow of water.
* Place ice cubes in hanging baskets, planters, and pots to give your plants a cool drink of water and help eliminate water overflow.
* Water plants deeply but less frequently to create healthier and stronger landscapes. Water until the soil is moist 3-4 inches below the surface.

Consider Planting a Rain Garden

A rain garden works especially well if water collects in your yard or driveway during or after a rainstorm.

A rain garden is made up of plantings placed in a depressed area in the landscape. Typlical plants in found in rain gardens include flowering perennials and grasses.

During rainstorms, you can divert rainwater runoff onto the garden through extended/re-directed downspouts which will allow the water to slowly filter into the ground, instead of running off directly overland and into gutters or storm drains (or flooding basements!). The runoff is filtered naturally by the soil and plants, which reduces the amount of polluted runoff entering our streams and rivers. Contaminated stormwater runoff is one of the main causes of water pollution in the streams and tributaries of the Jordan River Watershed. Rain gardens are a great way to intercept and filter that polluted water!