



By making thoughtful choices, you can help **protect biodiversity, conserve water, and create a space that thrives** despite BC's changing climate. Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just starting out, these tips will support you in growing a vibrant, sustainable garden that benefits both you and the environment.

Thank you for caring about our local ecosystems and for your desire to plant a resilient garden!

Mulching

Mulching is the practice of **covering soil with organic materials** like straw, leaves, or wood chips to **retain moisture, suppress unwanted plants, regulate temperature, and enrich the soil** as it breaks down.

Mulching is ideal during periods of heavy rain or hot, dry weather. It offers numerous benefits:

- **Protects the soil** from erosion and nutrient leaching.
- **Suppresses unwanted plants**, reducing competition for water and nutrients.
- **Enriches the soil** with nutrients as it decomposes.
- **Regulates soil temperature**, keeping plant roots cooler and hydrated.



Use what you have! Grass clippings, straw (available from local farmers), broken-down leaves, and wood chips are excellent mulching materials.



Resource

[Compost Education Centre](#) provides a great guide to mulching with a focus on compost.

Here's the Dirt: [Backyard Composting Brochure](#) by Metro Vancouver

Placing Your Garden

Garden placement refers to the **strategic location of your plants to take advantage of natural conditions** like shade, wind protection, and sun exposure to reduce water needs and help plants thrive.

Garden placement is especially important during hot, dry months or when water restrictions are in place. Thoughtful placement supports your garden by:

- **Reducing water loss** through evaporation by using natural shade.
- Creating **microclimates** near hedges, fences, or trees that help retain soil moisture.
- **Helping sensitive plants** stay cooler and require less frequent watering.

- Making it easier to group plants by **water needs and care routines**.
- Layering plants of different heights and sizes, providing shade for the shorter plants.
- Consider saving logs or fallen trees to place in your garden—they **retain moisture, enrich the soil** as they decompose, and add **natural texture and visual interest**.



Use what you have! Shady corners near buildings, the north side of your house, or under tall trees can provide ideal spots for thirstier plants.

Microclimate

A **microclimate** is a small area within a larger space where the climate—things like temperature, moisture, sunlight, and wind—differs from the surrounding area.

For example:



- A **shady spot under a tree** is cooler and retains more moisture than a sunny patch of lawn.
- A **south-facing wall** might absorb and reflect heat, making that area warmer than the rest of the yard.
- A **corner sheltered by a fence or hedge** might be less windy, reducing evaporation and making it feel more humid.

These subtle differences create opportunities in your garden. By recognizing and using microclimates, you can place plants in spots where they'll naturally thrive with less watering or protection.

Choosing Drought-Tolerant Plants

Choosing plants that thrive with less watering can help **conserve water and create a drought-resilient garden**.

Here are some great drought-tolerant plants suited for BC's **Zone 8a/8b** (Plant Hardiness Zone):

- **Native Plants:**
 - *Echinacea purpurea* (Purple Coneflower)
 - *Solidago canadensis* (Canada Goldenrod)
 - *Achillea millefolium* (Yarrow)
 - *Lupinus polyphyllus* (Big Leaf Lupines)
- **Other Hardy Plants:**
 - Mediterranean herbs: Lavender, Rosemary, Thyme, Sage
 - *Calendula officinalis* (Calendula)
 - *Rudbeckia hirta* (Black-Eyed Susan)



Purple Coneflower



Canada Goldenrod



Yarrow



Resource

[Grow Green Guide](#) - A guide to eco-friendly lawns and gardens in Metro Vancouver that provides a large list of locally available plants.

Watering Wisely

Reduce water consumption and keep your garden resilient with these tips:

- **Water early:** Between **5 - 10 AM** when temperatures are cooler.
- **Water deeply & less frequently:** This encourages deep root growth, making plants more resilient to heat waves.
- **Target the soil :** Water the soil and not the plants. Plants take up water through their roots.
- **Use mulch:** A thin layer of mulch around the base helps retain moisture and reduces evaporation.
- **Collect Rainwater:** Find a large barrel or container at a second-hand store to collect rainwater.

Collecting Rainwater

Collecting rainwater is a simple, cost-effective way to conserve water and keep your garden thriving during dry spells. Here are some helpful tips for making and using your own rain barrels or buckets:



- **Use What You Have:** Large buckets or containers placed around your garden can collect plenty of rainwater from roof drip lines or open areas.
- **Keep Water Clean:** Cover your barrels or buckets with fine mesh screens to prevent leaves, twigs, and debris from getting in—and to help keep mosquitoes out.
- **Prevent Mosquito Breeding:** Stir the water every couple of days to break up mosquito larvae. Alternatively, use mosquito dunks that are safe for gardens.
- **Make It Easy to Use:** If lifting heavy buckets isn't practical, use a small watering can or scoop to dip into the bucket for easy access.
- **Place Strategically:** Position buckets under downspouts, the edge of a roof, or in areas with no guttering to collect runoff efficiently.
- **Recycle & Reuse:** Food-grade barrels, repurposed garbage cans, or sturdy plastic storage bins make great starting points for a DIY system.

Saving Seeds

Saving your own seeds is cost-effective and ensures plant adaptability. Here's how to start:

- **Watch for seed pods:** Collect seeds from annual and biennial plants once the pods are hard and dry.
- **Store properly:** Keep seeds in a cool, dry location, away from moisture and sunlight.
- **Label everything:** Include the name, variety, and storage date. Seeds do expire—check regularly!
- **Harvest on dry days:** Prevent mold by drying seeds for a few days before storing.

Best plants for beginner seed saving: Corn, beans, peas, squash, pumpkins, chives, lettuce, tomatoes, and peppers.



Avoid saving seeds from grocery store produce, as they may be GMO or unsuitable for regrowth.



Resource

[UBC Seed Lending Library](#) offers lots of free seed saving resources

Growing Cover Crops

What is cover cropping? Cover cropping involves **planting specific crops** like clover, rye, or vetch to **protect and enrich the soil**. These crops prevent erosion, improve soil structure, add nutrients, and retain moisture during the off-season.

Cover crops help enrich and anchor the soil while adding essential nutrients, like nitrogen. They:

- **Reduce soil erosion** during the wet fall/winter by insulating and stabilizing the soil.
- **Retain moisture**, improving soil health.
- Are best applied in late summer.

Pro tip: In early spring, cut back and lay your cover crops over the soil to break down—this acts as a natural mulch that retains moisture, suppresses unwanted plants, and nourishes the soil as it decomposes.

Resource



Living on the Land: [a Guide to Growing Cover Crops](#)

West Coast Seeds has an article titled [How to Grow Cover Crops](#)

For a deeper look into cover crops, explore the [Cover Cropping Guide for British](#)

By implementing these drought-resilient gardening practices, you can help protect BC's biodiversity and adapt to changing climate conditions. Happy gardening!

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