

# 8 Best Gardening Hats for Ultimate Sun Protection and Style!



The best gardening hats offer protection from the sun that goes beyond just providing a little bit of shade. They protect your eyes. Moreover, they help regulate your body heat. Plus they have other great features such as protection from rain or insects. Of course, you might as well be stylish while in the garden (or anywhere!) Therefore, you'll want to explore the best gardening hats that fit your style.

## What to Look For In Choosing Among the Best Gardening Hats

When choosing the best gardening hat, it's essential to consider various features to ensure it meets your specific

needs and preferences. Here are some important features to look for:

## **Wide Brim**

Opt for a hat with a wide brim. You usually want one that's at least 3 inches wide. This will provide ample shade and sun protection for your face, neck, and shoulders.

## **UPF Rating**

Look for a gardening hat with a high Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) rating to ensure it effectively blocks harmful UV rays from the sun.

## **Material**

Consider the material of the hat. Lightweight, breathable, and moisture-wicking fabrics like cotton, nylon, or polyester are good choices for warm weather. For cooler seasons, choose a hat with insulating properties.

## **Adjustable Fit**

Hats with adjustable features like drawstrings, chin straps, or elastic bands provide a customizable and secure fit, especially on windy days.

## **Ventilation**

A gardening hat with ventilation holes or a mesh crown can help keep your head cool and prevent overheating.

## **Water Resistance**

If you often garden in wet conditions, choose a hat with water-resistant or waterproof material to keep your head dry.

## Neck Flap

Some gardening hats come with a detachable or built-in neck flap that offers additional sun protection for the neck and ears.

## Insect Protection

If you're in an area with a lot of insects, consider a hat that has built-in insect repellent or mosquito netting to keep bugs at bay.

## Durability

Look for well-constructed hats with reinforced seams and sturdy materials to ensure they can withstand the rigors of gardening.

## Washability

Check if the hat is easy to clean and maintain, as gardening hats can get dirty from soil and sweat.

## Best Gardening Hats for Ultimate Sun Protection and Style

Here are some of our recommendations for finding the best gardening hats with many of the aforementioned features:

### [FURTALK Womens Wide Brim Sun Hat with Wind Lanyard](#)

This hat has over 12,000 reviews on Amazon and more than three-quarters of them are five-star reviews. It's a unique eco-friendly hat made from recycled paper. It comes in two sizes, and it has a velcro strap that helps with adjusting either size to better fit you. The brim is over three inches

wide. And it has a UPF of 50+. At under \$25 on Amazon, this is a solid choice.

## **Leotruncy Women Super Wide Brim Sun Hat UPF50+ Waterproof Bucket Hat**

Although designed for fishing and camping, this is actually a great gardening hat. The brim is nearly 6" so you're going to have your own shade while you work. Other great features include UPF 50+, mesh panels for ventilation, an adjustable chin strap, and five different color options. If you want to make a style statement, this hat is a great choice. It's also under \$25 on Amazon.

## **EINSKEY Sun Hat for Men/Women**

This is a unisex hat that comes in eighteen different colors/prints so you can choose one (or more) that really suits your personal style. The brim is nearly 4" wide. It has mesh panels and a built-in sweatband, perfect for staying comfortable while working in the sun. However, if it happens to rain, you're covered because it's a waterproof hat.

## **[Home Prefer Men's Sun Hat with Neck Flap](#)**

This is a lightweight, breathable, quick-drying hat that includes a flap to protect your neck. It has 50+ UPF. It comes in twenty different colors to suit your style. Although labeled for men, this hat works well for anyone. Note that it is a one-size-only hat, though, so if you have a small head then it might not be the right fit for you. However, check the brand for other hats that might work as they have a wide range of options. And, at under \$20, this is one of the best gardening hats on the list in terms of affordability.

## **Jackell's Mosquito Head Net Hat**

If you're looking for insect protection in addition to sun protection then try a hat like this one. It includes a mesh face veil to protect you from bugs while you work in the garden. The brim is almost 3", it has UPF 50+, and it costs under \$20.

## **Palmyth Head Net Hat**

This is another good choice if you're looking for a hat with an insect veil option. It's versatile because you can choose to snap the veil up when you don't want to use it plus you have the option of a removable neck flap. The brim is 3.2", UPF 50+, sweatband and mesh for ventilation, water-repellent, and easy to wash.

## **Philights 100% Cotton Women Sun Hat**

If you want a hat that works in the garden as well as in your daily life, then take a look at this one. It's great because the brim has wire built into it that allows you to change the shape. Therefore, you can have a cute rolled-up brim when you're out and about but more shade when you're in the garden.

## **Kool Breeze Solar Hat**

This one is for those people who might want to splurge a little on cost to get something really special. This is a lightweight breathable straw hat with a super wide brim and UPF 50+. What makes it really special is that it has a built-in fan, powered with solar power, to keep you cool as you garden. It comes in many different styles and will cost you about \$60.

## **GearTOP Kids' Bucket Hats**

Do your kids hang out in the garden with you? If so, you'll also want good sun protection for them. GearTOP has some of



the best gardening hats for kids. They're lightweight, breathable, UPF 50+, and easy to adjust to the child's head size.

## Read More:

- [Top 5 Women's Gardening Overalls Ranked by Price](#)
  - [My Favorite Gardening Products](#)
  - [Gift Exchange Ideas with Fellow Gardeners](#)
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## My Favorite Garden Metaphors



The garden and the things that grow in it provide such great lessons for life. Perhaps that's why there are so many

terrific gardening metaphors. By looking at what nature has to teach us, we truly can learn a lot. So, here are some of my favorite garden metaphors and what I love about them.

# Life is a Garden and You Are the Gardener

This metaphor beautifully encapsulates a powerful life lesson about personal responsibility, growth, and mindfulness. Just as a garden requires careful tending, planning, and nurturing to flourish, so does our life. Further thoughts on what we can learn from this idea that [life is a garden](#):

- **Personal Responsibility:** In a garden, every plant's well-being depends on the gardener's attention and care. Similarly, in life, we are responsible for our own growth and happiness. We have the power to make choices, set goals, and take actions that shape our path.
- **Growth and Development:** Gardens need regular care, including watering, weeding, and pruning, for plants to reach their full potential. Likewise, in life, personal growth and development require continuous effort, learning from challenges, and letting go of things that no longer serve us.
- **Patience and Perseverance:** Gardens don't bloom overnight; they need time and patience to bear fruit and flowers. Similarly, in life, achieving our dreams and aspirations often demands perseverance and resilience. It's essential to keep moving forward, even when progress seems slow.
- **Mindfulness and Attention:** Successful gardeners are attentive to their plants, noticing signs of distress, and providing the necessary care. In life, being mindful and present allows us to recognize when we need self-care, prioritize our well-being, and build strong connections with others.

- **Seasons of Change:** Gardens experience cycles of growth, dormancy, and renewal as the seasons change. In life, we, too, go through various stages, facing ups and downs, but like the garden, we can adapt, grow, and evolve as we navigate life's different phases.

## Life's Garden is Filled with Seeds of Opportunity

This metaphor likens life to a vast garden filled with seeds representing various opportunities and possibilities. Just as a garden offers an array of seeds waiting to be sown, life presents us with countless opportunities for growth and success. Further thoughts:

- **Abundance of Choices:** Just as a garden has diverse seeds, life offers us a myriad of choices and paths to explore. We are presented with opportunities for education, career, relationships, personal interests, and more. Embracing this abundance empowers us to make informed decisions that align with our passions and values.
- **Nurture and Cultivation:** Seeds need nurturing, proper care, and the right environment to grow into thriving plants. Similarly, seizing opportunities in life requires dedication, effort, and persistence. By investing time and energy into our pursuits, we can cultivate our potential for success.
- **Timing and Patience:** In a garden, different seeds germinate and grow at their own pace. Similarly, in life, seizing opportunities may require patience and recognizing the right timing for certain endeavors. Understanding that success may not come overnight helps us stay committed and focused.
- **Weeding out Negativity:** Just as weeds can hinder a garden's growth, negativity and self-doubt can impede



our progress in life. By recognizing and removing negative thoughts or influences, we create space for positive opportunities and personal growth.

- **Embracing Diversity:** A diverse garden is beautiful and enriching. Similarly, embracing the diversity of opportunities in life allows us to expand our horizons, learn new things, and experience a more fulfilling journey.
- **Harvesting Rewards:** A well-tended garden eventually yields a bountiful harvest. Similarly, taking advantage of life's opportunities and pursuing our dreams can lead to the fulfillment of our goals and aspirations.

## Planting Seeds of Success

This gardening metaphor emphasizes the importance of taking intentional actions and making consistent efforts to achieve success in our endeavors. Here are some key lessons that can be drawn from this metaphor:

1. **Vision and Goals:** Just as a gardener starts with a vision of the garden they want to create, success begins with setting clear and meaningful goals. Identifying what we want to achieve gives us direction and purpose.
2. **Embracing Failure:** Not every seed will grow into a plant, and not every attempt will lead to immediate success. Embracing failure as part of the growth process allows us to learn, adapt, and improve on our journey to success.
3. **Cultivating Skills and Knowledge:** A gardener may need to learn about various plant species and gardening techniques. Similarly, acquiring new skills and knowledge relevant to our goals enhances our capabilities and chances of success.
4. **Creating the Right Environment:** Just as certain plants thrive in specific conditions, success may require creating an environment that supports our growth and

development. Surrounding ourselves with supportive people and a positive atmosphere can be beneficial.

5. **Consistency and Daily Actions:** Success often comes from consistent daily actions and habits. Like watering and caring for a garden regularly, consistent efforts contribute to steady progress and growth.
6. **Adaptability and Flexibility:** Gardeners adjust their strategies based on weather and other conditions. Similarly, being adaptable and flexible in our approach allows us to navigate changes and challenges on the path to success.
7. **Celebrating Progress:** As plants grow, gardeners take joy in their progress. Likewise, celebrating small milestones and achievements motivates us to keep moving forward and maintain a positive outlook.

## Harvesting the Fruits of Our Labor

This conveys the idea of reaping the rewards and benefits of hard work, dedication, and perseverance. Just as a farmer collects the fruits of their labor during harvest time, we too can experience the gratification of our efforts in various aspects of life. Here are some essential lessons from this metaphor:

- **Delayed Gratification:** Like crops that take time to mature, achieving significant accomplishments may require patience and delayed gratification. Understanding that results might not be immediate encourages us to stay committed to our endeavors.
- **Effort and Investment:** Farmers invest time, resources, and energy in their fields, and in life, hard work and effort are necessary to yield meaningful results. The more we invest, the more we stand to gain.
- **Joy in the Harvest:** Harvest time is a moment of celebration for farmers. In life, reaching milestones and achieving our goals brings a sense of fulfillment,

joy, and pride in what we have accomplished.

- **Reaping What We Sow:** The quality of the harvest depends on the care given during planting and cultivation. In life, the outcomes we experience are often a reflection of the choices and actions we make along the way.
- **Gratitude and Abundance:** Harvest time is a time of abundance, and it reminds us to be grateful for what we have achieved. Practicing gratitude for our successes enhances our overall sense of contentment and fulfillment.
- **Renewal and Planning:** After harvest, farmers plan for the next planting season. In life, success should be seen as part of an ongoing journey, encouraging us to set new goals and continue our pursuit of growth and improvement.

You may notice that a lot of these lessons are themselves metaphors related to gardening: reaping what we sow, harvesting rewards, cultivating gratitude ... turn to your garden to see what life lessons it has to teach you!

## Read More:

- [Playlist: Best Songs About Gardens](#)
- [Gardening for Mental Health](#)
- [Being a Beginner in the Garden](#)

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# Top 7 Eco-Friendly Peat Moss Alternatives



Peat moss has a long history of gardening benefits. However, it also poses significant problems for the environment when you use peat moss. Therefore you might want to explore peat moss alternatives. There are plenty of great options that do the job without damaging the earth.

## **What Is Peat Moss?**

Peat moss is a type of organic material that comes from the decomposition of plants in peat bogs over thousands of years. A peat bog, also known as a peatland, is a type of wetland ecosystem formed over thousands of years through the accumulation of dead vegetation.

## **Reasons People Use Peat Moss in Gardening**

Peat moss is used in gardens for various reasons:

## **Soil Amendment**

Peat moss is an excellent soil amendment that improves soil structure and texture. It helps to loosen dense soils, improving drainage in clay soils and retaining moisture in sandy soils. The fibrous nature of peat moss also enhances aeration, which is vital for root growth.

## **Water Retention**

Peat moss has a high water-holding capacity, enabling it to retain moisture in the soil. This characteristic is especially useful during dry periods, as it helps to keep the soil consistently moist, providing a more stable environment for plants.

## **pH Adjustment**

Peat moss is acidic, and its presence in the soil can lower the pH level, making it more acidic. This is beneficial for acid-loving plants, such as blueberries, rhododendrons, and azaleas, which thrive in slightly acidic conditions.

## **Organic Matter**

As an organic material, peat moss contributes to soil fertility by slowly releasing nutrients as it breaks down. It also serves as a substrate for beneficial soil microorganisms, improving the overall health of the soil ecosystem.

## **Seed Starting and Potting Mixes**

Peat moss is commonly used in seed-starting mixes and potting mixes for container gardening. Its light and fluffy texture provides an ideal medium for young seedlings to establish their root systems.

## **Soil Conditioner**

When applied as a top dressing or worked into the soil, peat moss acts as a soil conditioner, improving the overall quality

of the soil and enhancing plant growth.

## **Environmental Problems with Peat Moss**

Unfortunately, using peat moss creates problems for the earth. Peat bogs are unique ecosystems that store a significant amount of carbon and provide a habitat for various plants and wildlife. Unsustainable harvesting of peat moss can lead to the depletion of these valuable habitats and release stored carbon into the atmosphere. Additional problems related to using peat moss include impact on water quality and quantity, increased flooding in over-harvested areas, and the loss of species diversity.

## **Top 7 Eco-Friendly Peat Moss Alternatives**

Several peat moss alternatives are available for gardeners who want to reduce their environmental impact. Gardeners can create healthier soils, support sustainable practices, and reduce the impact on sensitive peatland ecosystems. Some of the best peat moss alternatives include:

### **Coconut Coir**

[Coconut coir](#) is a renewable resource derived from coconut husks, which are usually discarded as waste. Using coconut coir as a peat moss alternative helps recycle this agricultural byproduct and reduces the need for landfill disposal. It has similar water-holding capacity and aeration properties but is more sustainable and environmentally friendly. And yet, it is a more sustainable option compared to peat moss.

Do note that the production and transportation of coconut coir might have some environmental impact. This includes energy consumption and carbon emissions associated with processing



and transportation. However, these impacts are generally lower compared to peat moss extraction.

## **Compost**

Compost is made from organic waste, such as kitchen scraps and yard trimmings, which would otherwise end up in landfills. By composting organic materials, gardeners divert waste from landfills. This reduces methane emissions. Moreover, it creates a nutrient-rich soil amendment that improves soil health. There are very few potential drawbacks to using compost as a peat moss alternative, which is why it's a common peat moss alternative.

## **Leaf Mold**

Leaf mold is the result of decomposed leaves and is a valuable organic material for improving soil structure and water retention. It is an excellent source of nutrients for plants and can be made by composting leaves over time. Note that leaf mold may take a longer time to break down compared to compost, though. Therefore, gardeners may need to plan and start the decomposition process in advance.

## **Well-Rotted Manure**

Well-rotted manure is a byproduct of animal husbandry and agriculture. Using well-rotted manure as a soil amendment can help recycle organic waste. Aged and well-rotted animal manure can enrich the soil with nutrients and improve its fertility. It also enhances soil structure and microbial activity.

Note that manure from intensively farmed livestock may contain residual antibiotics or other substances that could impact soil and water quality if not properly managed. Ensuring that the manure comes from a reputable and sustainable source is essential if you want to use it as a peat moss alternative.

## Pine Bark

Pine bark, when aged and ground, can be used as a soil amendment to improve aeration and drainage in the soil. It is particularly useful for plants that prefer acidic conditions. Since it is a byproduct of the timber industry, you're making use of something that would otherwise go to the landfill. Note that some pine bark products may contain chemicals or preservatives used during timber processing. That's just something you want to check for before adding it to your garden.

## Rice Hulls

[Rice hulls](#) are lightweight and provide good aeration to the soil. They can be used as mulch or mixed into the soil to improve its structure. Like with pine bark, they are waste from another industry that we can use as gardeners. Like with coconut coir, there may be environmental impacts of transport but these should be less than with peat moss extraction.

## Peat-Free Potting Mixes

Many commercial potting mixes now come with peat-free formulations, using various combinations of the alternatives mentioned above. These mixes provide suitable growing mediums for various plants. Note, however, that some commercially available peat-free mixes might still contain non-renewable resources or synthetic materials. Checking the ingredients and sourcing sustainably produced mixes is important as a result.

## Read More:

- [5+ Cheap Ways to Make Soil More Acidic](#)
- [DIY Compost Using a 5-gallon Bucket](#)
- [Starting Seeds Inside: The Basic Guide](#)

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# Substack Gardening: Must-Read Newsletters If You Love Nature



I recently shared with you how much I was loving [Lia's Living Almanac](#). It's a Substack newsletter related to plants and gardening. However, it's not the only one that I subscribe to. Substack has many different gardening and nature newsletters that you might want to check out. Therefore, I wanted to share some more of my favorites with you today.

# What Is Substack?

If you're not familiar with Substack, then I'll give you a brief overview. Substack is a platform where you can easily create a newsletter. However, unlike other newsletter platforms, such as MailChimp, your newsletter also acts as a sort of blog. People who sign up for your newsletter will receive it in their email. Alternatively, they can read it on the Substack app or website. People who aren't signed up for the newsletter can see your articles on the site or app. Then they can decide if they want to sign up or not.

## Best Gardening and Nature Substacks

I shared previously about Lia's Living Almanac which is great for people who are inspired by growing and cooking their food. Let me share some of my other favorites with you now:

### Creatively Conscious

This is an intentional newsletter / digital magazine by creative / writer Claire Venus. She celebrates slow living and the well-being it brings, writes about nature in her life, and shares thoughts on motherhood and more. She recently shared her creative garden project called [The Soil Web](#). Claire explains it's "all about soil, making soil using worm hotels and observing the bio-diversity of soil!"

### June's Writing

June Girvin is a retired nursing professor and "Reader, writer, knitter, walker, gardener, critic." She chats conversationally about all different types of things in her newsletter, with gardening showing up prominently. She shares photos and descriptions of what is going on in her own garden. I often find that I learn best just by hearing other people's stories and what they're doing to problem solve. This fits me

better than “Here’s how to do things in three steps.” So that’s one of the reasons that her newsletter is appealing to me.

Also, she did a great important post on [planting for pollinators](#). We discussed that recently here on our site. And it’s the kind of thing that will show up in good gardening/nature newsletters from time to time. As you’ll discover, most of the writers on Substack are sharing a variety of different things that overlap and it weaves gardening into that.

## **Garden Study**

[Garden Study](#) is a subsection of a larger Substack called Culture Study. It’s authored by Anne Helen Petersen who shares many different smart thoughts about culture but wanted to create this section just to talk about the joys of gardening. As of the writing of this post, some of the recent articles in Garden Study related to container gardening, gardening mistakes, square foot gardening, and practicing patience when gardening with kids.

Note that this is a subscription-based newsletter. Substack allows authors to offer both free and paid content. Most authors offer both. Garden Study is an opt-in optional newsletter for paying subscribers but you do get a little bit of preview content before you pay. (Also, it’s good to pay if you can; these newsletters don’t write themselves!)

## **Life in the Real World**

This newsletter will be one of your favorites if you love nature photos. Author Karen Davis is a nature photographer as well as a writer. She shares “Drops of Beauty” regularly which are photo-rich looks at nature. They delight me every single time that I open one.

[About the newsletter](#), Karen writes:

*"This newsletter will be full of photos and reflections on what nature teaches me every day about beauty, wonder, and living in the world. I hope you will find it grounding, meditative, sometimes illuminating, and full of genuine curiosity about this strange thing we call Life."*

## **Neblina Wool Dye Studio Notes**

I've previously shared with you how I'm interested in gardening plants for natural dyes to dye yarn or fabric. There's so much great information in this newsletter that's all about that. The newsletter is written by Sara Meinecke who calls herself a "Natural dyer, knitter, sewer, slow fashion enthusiast." That's right up my alley (although I crochet instead of knit.) She explains that her Substack newsletter is about "sharing natural color processes, exploring local color palettes, and connecting with sustainability."

Recently, she shared a post about [Artist Dates](#). These are part of Julia Cameron's Artist's Way practice, in which you take yourself on a weekly solo creative date. What I love about the post is that it's a roundup of artist-date ideas specifically for natural dyers. For example, doing a dye color test of a plant local to your area or taking yourself on a nature walk. Very inspiring and creative!

## **The Gardening Mind by Jo Thompson**

This is one of the most comprehensive resources on Substack related to gardening. Authored by a garden designer, it's rich in helpful tips and information about all aspects of gardening. There are sections for small gardens, planting design, what not to do in the garden, resilient and sustainable gardening, and more. If you're looking for just one newsletter that will help you get started with gardening information, then this is where you might want to begin.



## Radicle

This is a place that shares essays and thoughts from multiple contributors about alternative gardening. If you're interested in social justice issues and climate concerns as they relate to gardening, then this is the spot for you.

## Remembering Wild by Sez Kristiansen

This is a beautifully written newsletter about a variety of different topics related to rewinding, the spirituality of nature, natural remedies, creativity, mental health, and more. In terms of gardening, Sez says that the space is for you if, among other things, you, "love the wild outdoors, gardening or being in nature." That would be us, right? It includes a podcast and meditation. While it's not a typical gardening newsletter, it's one you'll like if gardening is part of a slow-living path for you.

## Read more:

- [5 Things I Learned About Gardening in 2022](#)
- [Book Review: A Garden to Dye For](#)
- [10 Best Gardening Podcasts Worth Listening To](#)

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## Shopping for Grow Lights? Learn the Optimal Number of Lumens Required for Your

# Plants.



If you're venturing into the realm of indoor gardening, one essential tool you'll need to master is the grow light. These artificial light sources mimic the sun's rays, providing the energy necessary for plants to thrive. However, choosing the best grow lights for plants can be a daunting task. After all, there are a large number of options on the market. You want to stay frugal but you want to get a good light. One thing to consider is the number of lumens required for your plants.

## What Are Lumens?

Lumens are a unit of measurement used to quantify the total amount of visible light emitted by a light source. This is calculated as it is perceived by the human eye. In simpler terms, lumens are a measure of how bright a light appears to us.

The concept of lumens is based on the sensitivity of the human eye to different wavelengths of light. The eye is more

sensitive to green-yellow light, so light sources that emit more light in this range will appear brighter to us.

## Brighter Isn't Always Better

In the context of grow lights, lumens can be somewhat misleading. That's because plants have different light requirements than humans. Whereas lumens are measure by how our eyes perceive them, a plant's "eyes" would see them differently. Plants primarily use specific wavelengths of light in the blue and red spectrum for photosynthesis. Therefore, even though a grow light might have a high lumen output, it may not provide the right light spectrum or intensity that plants need for healthy growth. Nevertheless, lumens are one good indicator to look at when choosing the best grow lights for your plants.

## Lumens and the Best Grow Lights for Plants

Let's start out speaking generally. First, higher lumens generally indicate a brighter light output. If you know that you have plants that need a lot of bright light, then you might want to look for grow lights with higher lumens. But what's a high number for lumens? Most grow lights will offer between 2000 – 10000 lumens per square foot, so plants that need a lot of light will be closer to that 10000.

**As a very general guideline, some indoor growers recommend around:**

- 2000 to 5000 lumens per square foot for low-light plants
- 5000 to 7000 lumens per square foot for medium-light plants
- 7000 to 10000 lumens per square foot for high-light plants

## What does that mean?

Low-light plants can tolerate indirect or filtered light. They are ideal for areas in your home or office with less intense light levels. Examples include spider plants and snake plants as well as peace lilies.

Medium-light plants thrive in moderate light levels and can tolerate some direct sunlight. Placing them in locations with a bit more light will help them grow and remain healthy. Examples include philodendron, African violets, and Boston fern.

High-light plants benefit from intense light exposure, making them well-suited for use with high-output grow lights. They are often cultivated for their flowers, fruits, or specific culinary uses. Tomato and basil plants are common examples. Orchids are also in this category.

## The Best Low, Medium and High Light Grow Lights for Plants

If you're ready to start looking at some good options for grow lights, then you can head to Amazon to get started. Here are some top options in each category:

### Low Light Grow Lights

- [GYTF's T5 White Full Spectrum LED Plant Growing Lamp Strips](#) are 3000 lumens. They have very bright LED bulbs that provide full spectrum light. This is great for plants. You can get them in packs of 2, 3 or 4 ranging in price from \$19.99 to \$34.99.
- FECiDA's Desk Grow Lights for Indoor plants are another good option at 2000 lumens. These are designed to sit nicely on your desk. They have an adjustable height of 16" – 24". They cost a little over \$30 on Amazon.

- Need something a little taller? LBW's Adjustable Tripod Stand adjusts to between 15 and 48 inches. It's 3800 lumens.
- Monios-L T8 LED Grow Light 4FT grow light strips are 4300 lumens, so they're at the higher end for low light grow lights.

## Medium Light Grow Lights

MILYN's 100W Led Grow Light Bulb is 5000 lumens. If you have a range of low-light and medium-light plants then you might want to try these.

[FECiDA's 600W LED Grow Light Dimmable lights](#) are good for seed starting and for medium-light plants. It offers 5000 lumens.

## High Light Grow Lights

FECiDA's dimmable lights don't just come in the 600W. There's also a 1000W and even a 2000W. These offer 12000 and 20000 lumens respectively. Therefore, if you primarily grow indoor plants that fruit or flower, then you might want to check out what they have to offer.

## In Addition to Lumens: PPFD

If you want to use lumens as a rough reference, you can look for grow lights with higher lumen outputs, but it's crucial to also consider the light spectrum and coverage area. For example, plants in the vegetative stage require a higher proportion of blue light, while flowering and fruiting plants benefit from more red light. Therefore, a balanced spectrum with a higher total output of usable PAR light would be more valuable than just looking at lumens.

If you want to dig deeper, then you should also look at [Photosynthetic Photon Flux Density](#) (PPFD). PPFD measures the number of photons in the photosynthetically active

radiation (PAR) range that reach a specific area (usually measured in micromoles per square meter per second,  $\mu\text{mol}/\text{m}^2/\text{s}$ ).

Different plants have varying PPFD requirements at different stages of growth. It's crucial to provide the right amount of light for optimal photosynthesis and overall health. Therefore, when shopping for grow lights, it's essential to consider the light's PPFD output and its spectral distribution (the balance of red and blue light), rather than focusing solely on lumens.

But, getting the right number of lumens is a great place to start! It will help you narrow down the options. Then you can choose among those select options by looking at PPFD, cost, and other details.

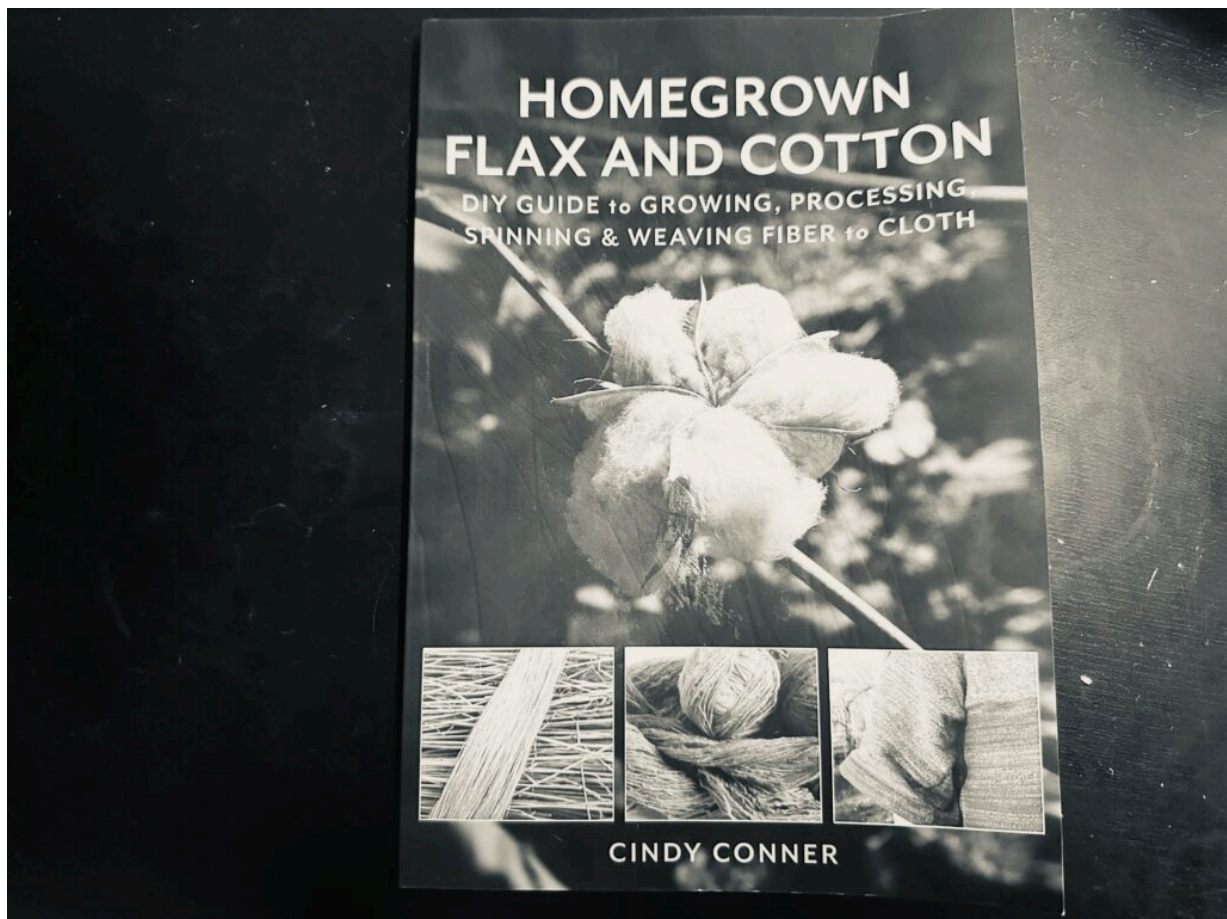
## Read More:

- [6 Inexpensive Grow Lights for Indoor Plants](#)
- [6 Tips to Revive Wilted Plants](#)
- [Container Gardening: Fabric Pots vs. Plastic Pots](#)

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# Book Review: Homegrown Flax and Cotton





Every once in a while, I get to marry multiple interests. For example, I have long loved crochet and believe in the slow yarn movement. Every now and then, I can combine that with gardening. I shared a bit of that with you when I did a book review of [A Garden to Dye For](#). Today, I'll share more with a book review of Homegrown Flax and Cotton by Cindy Conner.

## What Is Slow Yarn?

[Slow yarn](#), like the slow food movement, refers to engaging in yarn crafting mindfully and sustainably. It's part of an overall sustainable lifestyle. And it celebrates doing things by hand. Crochet and knitting are already slow crafts. After all, it takes a lot longer to create a handmade sweater than it does to just go buy one. However, you can extend that into a longer, more involved slow yarn process.

For example, in the book [Unraveling](#), author Peggy Orenstein shares her slow yarn story. She first learns how to shear a

sheep, which is no easy task. After learning, she shears enough to collect wool to make a sweater. She cleans the wool. Then she learns how to spin it. After that, she learns how to dye it. Finally, she is ready to knit it into a sweater. That's an example of slow yarn.

## **Slow Yarn in the Garden**

Wool isn't the only fiber that you can use to knit or crochet. In fact, there are many other great natural fibers that offer various benefits when crafting. Cotton is a favorite choice when making lightweight summer clothes as well as kitchen towels. Therefore, you can incorporate gardening into a slow yarn movement of your own. Cindy Conner's book "Homegrown Flax and Cotton" is all about this.

## **Homegrown Flax and Cotton by Cindy Conner**

This book is subtitled: "DIY Guide to Growing, Processing, Spinning and Weaving Fiber to Cloth." Or, as a description of the book puts it, you learn how to go "from seed to shirt." That pretty much sums up what this book is about. It teaches us how to grow either flax or cotton in our own gardens. Then, we learn how to actually take that material from plant form into yarn form. Finally, there are tips for weaving it to create a cloth. However, once you have the spun cotton or flax yarn, you could also knit or crochet with it. As a crocheter, that would be my personal plan.

## **Flax vs. Cotton for Growing Your Own Fiber**

The book explains that both flax and cotton are easier than you might expect to grow in your own garden. The author explains that if you live in a colder climate, then you will

probably want to try growing flax. In contrast, cotton is best grown in a warmer environment. Of course, if you live in a more temperate climate, then you could choose either one (or both).

Some of the other key differences, besides temperature requirements, of flax vs. cotton include:

- Flax has a shorter growing season, smaller flowers, and is usually a physically shorter plant than the cotton plant. Cotton plants actually have really pretty flowers that turn into the cotton.
- Generally speaking, cotton requires more garden space to grow. That said, flax tends to have a lower yield than cotton. As a result, you will need to plant more in order to get the same amount of yarn.
- Flax prefers well-draining, fertile soil with a slightly acidic to neutral pH range (around 6-7). It requires regular watering, particularly during its early growth stages. Cotton, on the other hand, prefers well-drained, loamy soil with good moisture retention. It has a higher water demand than flax and requires consistent watering throughout its growing season.
- Both flax and cotton can be susceptible to certain pests. However, the pests are different for each. Flax may attract insects like aphids, thrips, and flea beetles. Cotton can be affected by pests such as bollworms, aphids, and spider mites.
- Flax is a self-pollinating plant. Cotton, on the other hand, typically requires cross-pollination by bees or other [pollinators](#) to produce a good yield of cotton bolls.
- The harvesting and processing methods are different for each, which the book explains in greater detail.

## 8 Gardening Things to Learn From Homegrown Flax and Cotton

You'll have to read the book to get all of the details. In brief, though, here are eight things you'll learn about related to the gardening of cotton and flax:

1. If farm-to-table gardening and eating makes sense to you, then garden-to-garment will make sense as well. The textile industry does a lot of harm to the planet. You can help by growing your own fiber and making your own clothes.
2. In case you weren't already familiar with it, growing flax means that you'll be making clothes out of linen. Notably, you will not also be able to eat flax seeds from this plant. That's because there are two different flax plants – one that's edible and another that's for fiber.
3. For both plants, you want soil that is rich and ready to go in spring. You can use autumn leaves to cover the beds through the winter, preparing the soil for spring planting. However, if you live in an especially cold area, then you might instead plant "winter-kill" crops like forage radish, winter rye and oats.
4. You can plant flax in rows or by scattering the seeds. However, rows might make more sense as a beginner because it's tough to tell what's flax and what's weeds at first. That said you want a really dense planting so that the stalks are crowded together and don't get too wide.
5. You can get seeds for white, green, or brown cotton. The author thinks it's more fun to spin with the color, but you can choose what works for you. Make sure that you get cotton seeds that are NOT genetically modified.
6. If you know how to plant tomatoes, then you should find it relatively easy to learn to plant cotton!
7. If you've never seen a cotton plant grow before, then

you might find the whole process surprisingly exciting. It goes through interesting stages of flowering.

8. Did you know that in some states there are restrictions on planting cotton even in your own backyard garden?! If you live in a cotton-growing state, you should look into the rules before proceeding.

## Read More:

- [Colorfast vs. Fugitive Dyes From Plants](#)
  - [Garden Photo Walks for Mindfulness](#)
  - [5 Fun Ways to Use Yarn in the Garden](#)
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# 9 Cheap Ways To Naturally Attract Pollinators



Pollinators are important to your garden. If you want a sustainable garden, then you'll want to find ways to naturally attract pollinators. And if you want a frugal garden, then you'll need to figure out how to do so cheaply. Luckily, there are a lot of options for you to do so.

## What Are Pollinators?

I confess that I always think of bees when I think of pollinators. They're the quintessential ones. However, there are actually quite a few different pollinators. So, what does this term even mean?

Pollinators are any animal that helps to transfer pollen from the stamens to the stigma of plants. In other words, they facilitate plant mating. This leads to seeds and fruits. Bees are pollinators. However, so are birds, butterflies, moths, flies, and beetles. There are even some mammals like mice and bats that can help pollinate.

## Why Do You Want to Naturally Attract Pollinators To Your Garden?

Pollinators are a good thing. Without proper pollination, many plants would not be able to produce viable seeds or fruits. Therefore, you want to [bring them to your garden](#). Benefits when you naturally attract pollinators to your garden include:

### Increased And Improved Yields

With more efficient pollination, your garden's crop yields are likely to increase. They promote more uniform and abundant harvests. Pollinators can even improve fruit quality! Whether you're growing fruits, vegetables, or seeds, the presence of pollinators can lead to higher productivity and better overall yields.



## Biodiversity

Pollinators contribute to the overall biodiversity and ecological balance of your garden. They facilitate cross-pollination among different plant species, This aids in genetic diversity and the survival of various plant populations. By attracting pollinators, you promote a diverse range of flowering plants, which in turn supports a broader array of wildlife and beneficial insects in your garden. It's a beautiful cycle.

## Ecosystem Services

Pollinators provide invaluable ecosystem services beyond pollination. They contribute to the broader ecological functioning of ecosystems, including habitat creation, food web support, and nutrient recycling. By attracting pollinators, you enhance the ecological resilience and health of your garden, creating a more balanced and self-sustaining ecosystem.

## Conservation

Attracting pollinators to your garden contributes to the conservation and protection of these vital species. Many pollinators, including certain bee species, face population declines due to habitat loss, pesticide exposure, and other factors. By providing a welcoming environment with a variety of nectar-rich flowers and suitable nesting habitats, you can support pollinator populations and contribute to their conservation. This is a great thing for the world.

*Did you know that you can [certify your habitat to help wildlife](#)?!*

## Garden Beauty and Joy

Pollinators, such as butterflies and hummingbirds, add a

vibrant and colorful element to your garden. Their presence enhances the aesthetic appeal of your outdoor space. This creates a visually appealing and more dynamic environment. Watching pollinators in action can be a delightful and educational experience, bringing joy and wonder to both adults and children. In other words, it is simply fun to naturally attract pollinators to your garden.

## **Cheap Ways To Naturally Attract Pollinators**

Now that you're sold on the idea of attracting pollinators to your garden, how can you do it? Here are some of the best cheap ways to naturally attract pollinators:

### **Plant Native Wildflowers**

Native wildflowers are already well-adapted to the local ecosystem. Plus, they provide abundant nectar and pollen resources. Therefore, they attract a wide range of pollinators, including bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds, with their diverse colors, shapes, and scents. Native plants also support local biodiversity and help maintain the ecological balance of your region. This is one of the best cheap ways to naturally attract pollinators while adding beauty to your garden.

### **Create Habitat Diversity**

Provide a variety of habitats and shelter options to attract different pollinator species. Incorporate elements like flowering shrubs, trees, grasses, and nesting sites such as log piles or rock crevices. These habitats offer nesting opportunities, resting places, and protection from predators. Therefore, they are key to making your garden more inviting to pollinators.

## **Provide Water Sources**

Place shallow dishes or bowls filled with water in your garden to provide a water source for pollinators. Adding pebbles or stones to the container allows insects to perch safely while drinking. Water sources are particularly crucial in hot and dry climates.

## **Avoid Pesticides**

Minimize or eliminate the use of pesticides in your garden. Pesticides can be harmful to pollinators, disrupting their behavior, health, and reproduction. Embracing organic gardening practices helps create a safe and welcoming environment for pollinators, allowing them to thrive and carry out their important pollination role.

## **Plant a Succession of Blooming Plants**

Select a diverse array of flowering plants that bloom at different times throughout the growing season. This ensures a continuous food supply for pollinators from spring to fall. By providing a succession of blooms, you support pollinators throughout their lifecycle, from early-season emergence to late-season preparations for winter.

## **Provide Host Plants for Caterpillars**

Many pollinators, such as butterflies, require specific host plants for their caterpillars to feed on. Research and include host plants in your garden that cater to the needs of particular pollinator species. By supporting caterpillar development, you encourage the presence of adult butterflies and contribute to their life cycle.

## **Minimize Garden Disturbances**

Limit excessive garden clean-up and leave some areas

undisturbed. Some pollinators, such as ground-nesting bees, require bare soil or leaf litter for nesting. Allow natural debris and leave patches of bare ground. In this way, you provide nesting sites and overwintering habitat for these beneficial insects.

## Use Group Plantings

Plant flowers in clusters or groups rather than single plants scattered across the garden. Groupings provide a concentrated and easily recognizable food source for pollinators, increasing the efficiency of their foraging. This way, they can visit multiple flowers in one area, maximizing their access to nectar and pollen resources.

## Be The Bee

In other words, ask yourself if you would come to this garden if you were bee. What would need to be different in order to bring you to buzz and pollinate there? Use your intuition to help guide you to enhancing your garden so that it naturally attracts pollinators.

## Read More:

- [Top 9 Common Plant Pests and How to Control Them](#)
  - [Upcycling in the Garden: Everyday Items That Can Be Functional Garden Decorations](#)
  - [Natural Ways to Control Fungus in Plants](#)
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## Playlist: Best Songs About

# Gardens



I have been known to pick really random themes and make music playlists around them. One of my favorites is a playlist of songs about rain. Fire, sleep, and “bang bang” are a few other themes. It’s easy to find songs about nature. However, what about songs that are specifically about gardens? Here are the songs that I would put on a garden songs playlist:

## “Garden Song” or “Inch by Inch”

This is a folk song written by David Mallett. It’s been covered by many famous folk singers. However, the most popular version is John Denver’s. It really is just about life in a garden ... and how that’s a metaphor for all working together to make the Earth a better place.

“The Garden Song” has become an [anthem for gardeners](#) and nature lovers alike, inspiring a sense of connection to the Earth and a desire to cultivate and nurture life. Its positive

message and engaging melody have made it a beloved and enduring song in the realm of gardening and environmental awareness.

## **Favorite Lines:**

*"Pullin' weeds and pickin' stones  
Man is made of dreams and bones  
Feel the need to grow my own"*

## **"The Garden Rules" by Snow Patrol**

This song is about childhood and innocence and first love, reflected in storytelling about playing games in the garden as kids.

## **Favorite Lines:**

*"You would call the garden rules out like commands  
And we would all obey  
But you'd stifle giddy laughter as you spoke  
And puncture the pretend  
Then we would chase our tails, until the sun forgot to  
shine  
And our parents called our names, 'til just you and I were  
left"*

## **Van Morrison's "In The Garden"**

"In the Garden" is a track from Van Morrison's 1986 album, "No Guru, No Method, No Teacher." The song is a contemplative and spiritual piece that reflects Morrison's interest in mystical themes. The lyrics evoke a sense of personal transformation and the desire to find solace and connection in a garden setting. It's about finding meaning in life and reflects that tuning in to nature, and to oneself through connection to nature, is part of that process.

## Favorite Lines:

*"No guru, no method, no teacher  
Just you and I and nature  
And the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost  
In the garden wet with rain"*

## "Garden" by Nahko and Medicine for the People

This is another song reflecting the spiritual essence and power of nature. The singer describes the song [in an interview](#):

*"When I'm alone, I am surrounded...by nature, my ancestors, and Creation. We are never truly alone. Look deep within, above and below. That's what gets addressed in this song. It takes time, nurturing, and patience to turn the stones, or even the soil, that has been there since we were children. It takes courage to tend the garden of your body, mind, and soul."*

## "Safe in My Garden" by The Mamas and The Papas

This song contrasts the safety of a bucolic peaceful garden with the turmoil of the 1960's wartime and civil unrest. On the one hand, the singer is "safe in my garden" where "an ancient flower blooms." On the other hand:

*"When you go out in the street  
So many hassles with the heat  
No one there can fill your desire  
Cops out with the megaphones  
Telling people stay inside their home  
Man, can't they see the world's on fire"*



It makes you want to find the peace of the garden again. But also safety is a privilege and activism is important, so there's this contrast of what to do.

## **“The Garden” by Rush**

This song uses the metaphor of a garden to convey its deeper philosophical message. The garden represents life itself, with all its complexities, choices, and experiences. Like a garden that requires nurturing, tending, and cultivation, the song suggests that life is a journey of personal growth and self-discovery. It encourages individuals to embrace the challenges and opportunities that come their way, much like tending a garden and watching it flourish.

Gardens can be tranquil spaces for reflection and contemplation, and the song evokes a sense of introspection. It prompts listeners to reflect on the meaning of their own lives, the choices they've made, and the lessons they've learned. It's a song that is [driven by the melody](#), and this lends itself well to that sense of introspection.

### **Favorite Lyrics:**

*“In the fullness of time  
A garden to nurture and protect  
In the rise and the set of the sun  
'Til the stars go spinning  
Spinning 'round the night  
Oh, it is what it is and forever  
Each moment a memory in flight”*

## **“Garden Kisses” by Giveon**

There are several songs that use the garden as a metaphor for love/sexuality. There are a lot of garden metaphors about women's sexuality. This incorporates some of those. Think “forbidden fruit” references. It's a sensual song.

## Favorite Lines:

*"Please sprout up for me*

*Your tulips are my fate."*

## "Secret Garden" by Madonna

This is another sensual song, in which the secret garden refers to the singer's sexuality and pleasure. I include it because it has some great garden metaphors. Additionally, it's one of my favorite songs on the list. It comes from her Erotica album. The chorus is:

*"A petal that isn't torn  
A heart that will not harden  
A place that I can be born  
In my secret garden  
A rose without a thorn  
A lover without scorn"*

## "Garden Party" by Ricky Nelson

This isn't really about gardening. It's about Nelson's musical career and the people he encountered with it. However, it is set in a "garden party." This actually references Madison Square Garden. The song is based on a 1970's concert there. However, I love picturing it as a party in an actual garden with Yoko and Dylan and Mary Lou. It's just a fun fantasy. And a catchy little song.

## Favorite Lines:

*"People came from miles around  
Everyone was there  
Yoko brought her walrus  
There was magic in the air  
And over in the corner*

*Much to my surprise  
Mr Hughes hid in Dylan's shoes  
Wearing his disguise"*

What are your favorite garden songs? Tell me the ones I don't know about yet!

## **Read More:**

- [Garden Photo Walks for Mindfulness](#)
  - [10 Best Gardening Podcasts](#)
  - [The Best Plants for Mental Health Benefits](#)
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# **11 Compelling Reasons to Embrace Rainwater Harvesting for Sustainable Living**



Rainwater harvesting is the practice of collecting and storing rainwater for later use. It can be a key component of sustainable living. If you garden, then you can't help but notice the changes to the earth. As a result, you might feel a drive to live more sustainably. Rainwater harvesting for sustainable living makes a lot of sense. You'll see that there are some really compelling reasons to give it a try at your own home.

## What Is Rainwater Harvesting?

As the name explains, this is the process of harvesting rain. In other words, when it rains, you collect that water. Then you make use of it. Rainwater harvesting [includes](#) catching the water, filtering it, storing it, and then using it. Rainwater harvesting is an effective way to conserve water resources, implement [integrated urban water management](#) strategies, and promote sustainability.

# **What Is Sustainable Living?**

Sustainable living refers to a lifestyle that aims to minimize one's ecological footprint and promote practices that are environmentally responsible, socially just, and economically viable. It involves making conscious choices and taking actions that reduce the negative impact on the planet and contribute to the well-being of both present and future generations. Rainwater harvesting for sustainable living is just one component of a whole lifestyle. As someone interested in frugal gardening, you may also already embrace many other elements of sustainable living.

## **Compelling Reasons to Embrace Rainwater Harvesting for Sustainable Living**

Here are some of the reasons that you might want to take the leap into rainwater harvesting for sustainable living.

### **Rainwater Is Great For Your Garden**

Rainwater harvesting is commonly used for watering gardens and landscaping. Rainwater is an excellent source of water for plants because it is free of chlorine, fluoride, and other chemicals typically found in tap water. Additionally, rainwater is naturally soft and slightly acidic, which is beneficial for many plants. Since you already garden, why not take advantage of the opportunity to water the garden with rain?

### **A short list of the benefits of rainwater harvesting for your garden includes:**

- Provides a free and abundant water supply for garden irrigation.

- Reduces reliance on municipal or groundwater sources for garden watering.
- Offers a natural and chemical-free water source, beneficial for plant health.
- Helps conserve potable water for essential household needs.
- Reduces water bills and overall water consumption.
- Supports sustainable gardening practices and environmental stewardship.
- Prevents soil erosion and nutrient runoff by controlling the intensity of watering.
- Allows for more efficient water distribution directly to plant roots.
- Improves soil moisture retention, especially in dry climates.
- Reduces the risk of overwatering, which can harm plants and promote disease.
- Promotes self-sufficiency and resilience by providing an independent water supply.
- Can be used for other garden-related activities, such as washing gardening tools or containers.
- Encourages water-conscious behavior and environmental awareness.
- Enhances overall garden health, growth, and productivity.
- Can be integrated with other sustainable gardening practices, such as composting or mulching.

## **Rainwater Harvesting for Sustainable Living Helps Earth's Water Situation**

Sustainable living is all about being good to the Earth. Water is key on our planet. Water conservation and water scarcity are two aspects that help us reduce water waste and increase water availability around the world. They're similar but also different:

## **Water Conservation**

Water conservation refers to the efficient use and management of water resources to minimize wastage and preserve water for future generations. Rainwater harvesting contributes to water conservation by collecting and utilizing rainwater for various purposes, reducing the need for freshwater from traditional sources. By using harvested rainwater for activities like irrigation, toilet flushing, or washing clothes, you conserve potable water that would otherwise be consumed for those tasks.

## **Mitigating Water Scarcity**

Water scarcity occurs when the demand for water exceeds the available supply, leading to insufficient access to water for human and environmental needs. Rainwater harvesting helps mitigate water scarcity by providing an additional source of water. By capturing and storing rainwater, you reduce the strain on existing water sources, such as groundwater or municipal supply, especially during periods of drought or water shortages. Harvested rainwater can serve as a valuable backup or alternative water source to supplement traditional supplies, thereby increasing water availability and reducing scarcity risks.

## **Other Environmental Benefits of Rainwater Harvesting for Sustainable Living**

In addition to the water benefits of rainwater harvesting, there are some other important environmental benefits that make for compelling reasons to try rainwater harvesting for sustainable living.

### **Reduces Strain on Stormwater Management Systems**

Rainwater harvesting helps reduce the volume of stormwater runoff entering municipal stormwater management systems. By capturing rainwater from rooftops and other surfaces, you



decrease the load on storm drains and sewage treatment plants. This can prevent overflow situations during heavy rainfall, which can lead to pollution of water bodies and strain on infrastructure.

## **Supports Local Ecosystems**

By reducing stormwater runoff, rainwater harvesting helps maintain the natural water balance in local ecosystems. This is particularly important in urban areas where impervious surfaces like roads and buildings dominate the landscape. By allowing rainwater to infiltrate into the ground or using it for irrigation, you help replenish groundwater levels, support vegetation growth, and provide water for wildlife habitats.

## **Minimizes Erosion and Soil Degradation**

Traditional stormwater runoff can cause erosion and soil degradation due to the force and volume of water rushing over surfaces. Rainwater harvesting systems, such as rain gardens or infiltration basins, capture and slow down the flow of rainwater, allowing it to infiltrate into the soil. This helps replenish groundwater and reduces erosion, promoting healthier soil conditions and preserving land integrity.

## **Reduces Demand on Energy-Intensive Water Treatment**

Rainwater harvesting decreases the demand for water from centralized systems, which often rely on energy-intensive treatment processes. By utilizing harvested rainwater for non-potable uses like irrigation or toilet flushing, you reduce the need for water treatment, pumping, and distribution. This indirectly lowers the energy consumption and associated carbon emissions of water treatment facilities, contributing to a greener and more sustainable infrastructure.

## **Mitigates Urban Heat Island Effect**

The urban heat island effect occurs when urban areas experience higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas

due to the concentration of buildings, pavement, and lack of vegetation. Rainwater harvesting, when combined with green infrastructure practices, such as green roofs or rain gardens, can help mitigate this effect. Vegetation and green spaces associated with rainwater harvesting systems help cool the environment through evapotranspiration, shading, and reducing heat radiation, creating a more comfortable and sustainable urban environment.

## **Self-Sufficiency**

By collecting rainwater, you become less reliant on external water sources. Therefore, you experience a greater degree of self-sufficiency. This is particularly advantageous in rural areas. It's also important during emergencies when access to water may be limited. Having a rainwater harvesting system in place ensures a more reliable and independent water supply.

## **Community Sustainability Education**

Implementing rainwater harvesting systems in your home can serve as an educational tool for your family and community. It raises awareness about water conservation, sustainability, and the importance of utilizing alternative water sources. You can inspire others to adopt similar practices, fostering a more environmentally conscious community. If you participate in community gardens then you know how much this type of education benefits everyone.

## **Collecting Rainwater Saves You Money**

Finally, sustainable living also means living within your financial means. Using rainwater for various household needs can lead to significant cost savings over time. Depending on your location and water usage, rainwater harvesting can help lower your water bills by reducing the amount of water you consume from traditional sources. This is particularly beneficial in areas with high water costs or where water

metering is in place.

## Read More:

- [Harvesting Rainwater for the Frugal Gardener](#)
  - [4 Frugal DIY Drip Irrigation Systems](#)
  - [5 Plants That Easily Grow in Water](#)
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# A Visit to Hollister House Garden



*Hollister House Garden, all photos by Kathryn Vercillo, 2023*

I'm never going to have an English garden. It just feels a little bit too perfect for my brown thumb, even though it has some informality to it. Either way, though, they are beautiful gardens, and it's a delight to get a chance to visit one. I

had just that chance recently on a family trip to Connecticut. We were staying in Washington, CT, where we visited the Hollister House Garden.

## What Is Hollister House Garden?

As [the website](#) proudly proclaims, this garden is:

*“A classic garden in the English manner, with a loosely formal structure, informally planted in generous abundance situated in the Litchfield hills of Northwestern Connecticut.”*

They further go on to explain that the garden is inspired by famous English gardens. However, it's an American version of that inspiration, particularly in terms of plant choice.





## What Is an English Garden?

An English garden refers to a particular style of gardening that originated in England. It became popular during the 18th and 19th centuries. Their style is characterized by its

naturalistic, romantic, and somewhat informal design despite the fact that it has a formal structure.

### **Formal aspects of the English garden include:**

1. **Symmetry and Balance:** Formal English gardens often exhibit a sense of symmetry and balance in their design. Pathways, hedges, and flowerbeds may be laid out in precise geometric patterns, creating an orderly and structured appearance.
2. **Defined Shapes and Lines:** The formal elements of an English garden involve crisp and well-defined shapes and lines. This includes neatly trimmed hedges, geometrically shaped flowerbeds, and precisely aligned paths or walkways.
3. **Architectural Features:** Formal English gardens often incorporate architectural elements, such as statuary, fountains, and ornate gazebos. These features add a touch of elegance and structure to the overall design, enhancing the formal atmosphere.
4. **Pruned and Controlled Plantings:** Plants in formal English gardens are typically pruned and shaped meticulously to maintain a controlled and uniform appearance. This includes topiaries, espaliered trees against walls, and manicured shrubs.





## **Informal aspects of the English garden include:**

1. **Naturalistic Layout:** Informal English gardens embrace a more natural and relaxed layout. Paths and walkways may meander and curve, mimicking the flow of nature rather than adhering to strict geometric patterns.

2. **Abundance of Plantings:** Informal gardens are known for their profusion of plants and flowers. They often feature mixed and densely planted beds of various colors, textures, and heights, creating a sense of abundance and wild beauty.
3. **Soft Edges and Blending:** Informal English gardens avoid sharp edges and instead emphasize softer transitions. Plants may spill over onto pathways, creating a more organic and less structured appearance.
4. **Embracing Nature:** Informal gardens celebrate the natural characteristics of the landscape. They may incorporate elements such as natural rock formations, existing trees, and gentle slopes, harmonizing with the surroundings rather than imposing rigid structure.
5. **Cottage Garden Influence:** Informal English gardens often draw inspiration from traditional cottage gardens, with their casual and charming aesthetics. This influence can be seen in the use of cottage-style plants, including roses, hollyhocks, and other cottage garden favorites.





## More About Hollister House Garden

George Schoellkopf started the garden in 1979. The garden is located on about 25 acres of woodsy land, next to a house built in the 18th century. Hollister House Garden was designed

to complement the old house as well as the barns and buildings from the same era that surround the place. They used antique / handmade materials as much as possible to add to this feeling.

The garden combines formal elements with the natural surroundings. The paths, walls, and hedges blend into the landscape. There are about different sections with varying colors and spaces. Walls and hedges, about eight to ten feet tall, define the different areas, creating a solid structure for the various plantings. There is also a winding brook and a large pond on the property.

## Plants at Hollister House Garden

Naturally, you'll see [different plants blooming at different times](#) depending on when you visit the garden. These are mostly spring and summer plants. Therefore, you should visit between April and October. During the winter months, you get a little bit of fall foliage, but you don't see a lot of the beauty of the English garden. We went at the beginning of June, which is one of the best times of year to go. I recognized lilies and forget-me-nots, as well as the red Japanese Maple trees.

My sister knows plants a lot better than I do, so she pointed out the others for me. The small hedges were Boxwood, the large ones were Yew. There were also a lot of dogwood trees. For flowers she noticed irises, peonies, azalea, zinnias. She said not everything was in bloom but we also saw viburnum, daisies, salvia, dianthus, sweet bush, and wiegela. And, of course, mountain laurel, which is the state flower. It was a lot of lovely color laid out in little "rooms" separated by hedges.





## **What I Loved About Hollister House Garden**

Those “rooms” are what’s so great about English gardens. One of the things that I love about old San Francisco houses is that they’re made up all of these little rooms and nooks so

even in a small square footage space, you get to explore and see discover things. English gardens are like this. While this particular garden is large, you could scale it down and use hedges to create rooms in a smaller garden and achieve the same effect. It's a delight because it feels like you're on an adventure, not just sitting in a garden.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with just sitting in a garden, either. There are plenty of great places to just sit in this garden as well. Benches. Tiered rock stairs. We hiked over a small bridge to a viewpoint overlooking the house and garden, sitting on large rocks there. It was peaceful. Beautiful. Inspiring. Colorful. Green, so green. The weather was lovely, the view was amazing, and the people we ran into while visiting were all welcoming. All in all, it's what you want when you visit a garden.

## **Read More:**

- [Garden Photo Walks for Mindfulness](#)
- [The Best Plants for Mental Health Benefits](#)
- [Greek Gardening Style on the Cheap](#)