

Growing Native

Frugal gardeners are always looking for ways to make their yards attractive, while holding costs down. Re-introducing native plantings to your property will do just that.

Native plants are those that were growing in any area before humans introduced plants from distant lands. In my Zone 7 garden located in the Pacific Northwest, they include things like Evergreen trees, salal, maples, columbine, ferns, bleeding heart, Oregon grape, honeysuckle, rhododendrons & huckleberries.

There are many advantages to going native:

- Native plants, once established, can survive the winter's cold and the summer's heat while requiring no watering or fertilizing. This saves on your energy bill as well as cuts the time you need to spend maintaining the garden (thinking on a global scale, if we all did this, the need to produce chemical fertilizers would be curtailed too).
- Native plants tend to stay where you put them. Simple but oh, what a nice trait. They rarely become invasive, unlike some plants we use from other areas. Just think of the time & energy this could be saving?
- Typically, native plants are pest & disease resistant. Starting to see a trend here? There will be no need to purchase products to aim at the crawly things!
- Landscaping with native plants improves the environment by returning the area to a healthy ecosystem. Growing native will do the best job of providing food & shelter for a wider variety of native wild animals and birds, plus you'll get free entertainment in your own back yard.

To find information on Native Plants for your region or zone,

check with local garden clubs, county extension services or the [New England Wildflower Society](#) (US & Canada). They provide extensive lists of resources including each states Native Plant Society contact information, specific plants for all the regions, as well as planting information and activities.

Harvest Your Own Seeds



Since my garden is located in Zone 7, now is the time to start planning ahead for the hundreds of free plants I want to get next spring. If you're just starting out at gardening as a hobby, you may be wondering how does one get free plants? You are also probably wondering that if there are ways to get free plants, is it possible for me do this?

The frugal gardener should be outside searching the plants in our gardens that are going to seed. These are the very same seeds most people buy at the garden stores in the spring. That's right, the seeds are sitting right in front of us, waiting to be harvested!

If left alone, the seeds will dry and drop around the original plant(s). If you gather the seed & save them over winter, you can start them indoors, in a greenhouse or plant them directly in the garden after the last frost (there is also nothing wrong with letting them seed on their own. It may get a bit crowded, but you can dig up the 'babies' and replant them).

All you need to harvest your own seeds are a few basic supplies and you'll be ready to become a Seed Saver!

- Marker
- Envelopes
- Small paper bags (occasionally a BIG bag, depending on the size of your plants)
- Clippers

Pick a dry day to gather seeds as they will be less likely to mold over winter. Search out the plants that are at the end of their growing season. If you look closely where the flowers were, you should be able to spot some in the next stage – where the plant starts to set its seed for the next season. Pick the best specimen to save the seed from. The more carefully you select the plant, the better quality seedlings you will have come next season.



The best seed savers are both patient and observant – making frequent tours of the garden, looking for plants that are in the process of going to seed (be sure you stop dead heading or you'll never have any blossoms setting seeds). You want them as mature as possible, but you want to catch them before they disperse on their own or before it rains.

To actually gather the seeds, I find I get some of the seeds from a flower or plant, but rarely all of them. Since the plants are dry, that makes the seeds hard to capture. I've tried different methods for different flowers. This includes cutting small seed pods & just putting them whole into an envelope or cutting larger pieces and putting them in paper bags. Often I've slipped the bag over the stem, then bent the stem off and tipped the bag over. The biggest difficulty comes because the stems are dry so as soon as something touches any part of the plant the seeds will scatter. You'll probably have to try a plant a few times before you come up with a good way to get some of the seeds captured from that particular plant.

Allow your seeds to air dry indoors at room temperature as they are laid out on a flat surface. Once dry, you can choose

to clean them up or not. I've done it both ways. If I have time, I clean up my collections and put all the like seeds together in an envelope and seal (being sure to label). If the pieces won't fit easily into the envelope, I clean up my collection, tossing stems and old blossoms, and just use the smallest size paper bag by folding over the top, taping shut and labeling.

Keep the packets of seeds in a cool, dark and dry space over the winter*** The best spot would be a moisture proof container inside your freezer or refrigerator, but I've successfully grown plants from seed that just got stuck in a desk drawer.

Start looking at your plants that look a bit worse for wear and see if you can harvest a few seeds. You can then start dreaming of where you're going to expand your garden next spring or how many people on your gift giving list would enjoy a gift from your yard.

**** Use of Desiccants: To keep seeds dry, you could use the little packets of silica gel that come with new electronics and other items or being frugal, you could make your own. Just take a teaspoon of powdered milk and make a small pouch or envelope out of paper towel. It works just as well to absorb any moisture and keeping your seeds dry.*

Know Your Plant Zones

Average Annual Minimum Temperature

ZONE	Zone	Temperature
1	1	Below -50 F
2a	2a	-50 to -45 F
2b	2b	-45 to -40 F
3a	3a	-40 to -35 F
3b	3b	-35 to -30 F
4a	4a	-30 to -25 F
4b	4b	-25 to -20 F
5a	5a	-20 to -15 F
5b	5b	-15 to -10 F
6a	6a	-10 to -5 F
6b	6b	-5 to 0 F
7a	7a	0 to 5 F
7b	7b	5 to 10 F
8a	8a	10 to 15 F
8b	8b	15 to 20 F
9a	9a	20 to 25 F
9b	9b	25 to 30 F
10a	10a	30 to 35 F
10b	10b	35 to 40 F
11	11	Above 40 F

If you're interested in gardening to any extent at all, you should really know what zone your garden is in. Having this number in mind will help you pick plants for your area that are going to survive over winter. Step number one for a frugal gardener is to stick to plants that will handle the weather where you're live.

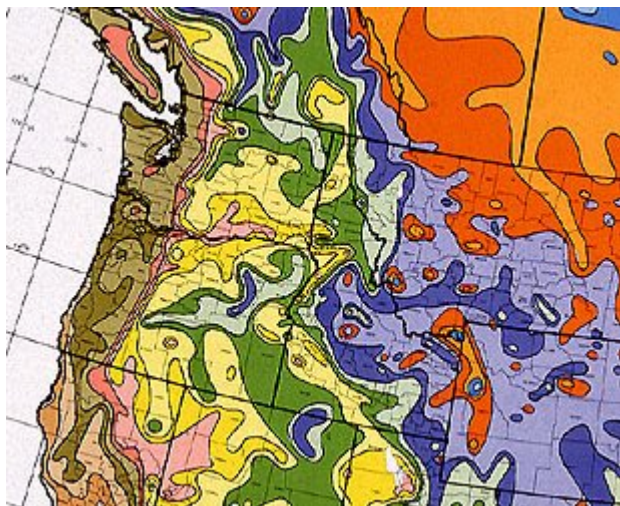
Please understand that there are some difficulties with this Zone idea, especially towards the west coast of the U.S. Due to the air coming in off the Pacific, and the multiple mountain ranges it has to cross, some areas of the west coast states are in the same zone, but experience totally different climates. So, the Zone map is a place to start, not the end all of your own gardens identity.

Once you have the Zone your gardens are classified as, you are better prepared to go to your local nurseries as well as participate in gardening forums on line Often when we as gardeners ask anyone for help, the first thing we hear is "What Zone are you in?"

Zones can tell a gardener all sorts of things including the

amount of rainfall, average temperatures and the earliest and latest frost one can expect for your area. All this info adds up to which plants you can grow year round in your gardens if – and this is a big IF – all the other variables for that plant are met.

Plant Hardiness Northwest



Annuals vs. Perennials

You've decided to add some color to your garden and every store has dozens of the 4 or 6 packs of annuals lined up just like candy bars at grocery check out lines. It is tempting to choose a few petunias, some trailing lobelia and other "color spots" as garden departments like to call them. Your mind sees them filling pots, jazzing up your empty garden beds and perking up your entry area.

Now, stop and think. How many times have you done the same thing? Year after year, planting these temporary flowers, giving a brief display to your yard and making a negative impact on your wallet? Annuals are short lived and most of us

are drawn to them every spring and summer.

The frugal alternative is to search out the perennial offerings, those plants often not looking like the stars of the garden department. Most come in gallon containers or larger and sport price tags many times the amount of the annuals.

Wait a minute. Why would these be the frugal gardener's choice? The basic difference is annuals are going to provide that burst of color once – and a perennial plant comes back each year, or is hardy year round.

If you consider gardening with perennials like putting money into an investment account, you start to get the vision. Besides continuing to add to the beauty and value of your garden, you can divide perennials every couple of years; making them a gardener's equivalent of [a compound interest bearing account](#)!

Now, there is something a frugal gardener can embrace! Think of how many pots you can fill on a permanent basis? Which gardeners on your gift list would love a plant or a pot full of plants? The price of that one perennial keeps going down as you see it multiplying over the years.

Once you understand the differences between annuals and perennials your decision to fill your garden with things like hardy geraniums, ornamental grasses and flowering shrubs will be clear. And, if you're still needing the color burst from a pack of petunias, you can get one and splice them in between the work horses of your garden...the perennials!

Read more:

- [Blue Apron Review](#)
- [Motley Fool](#)

- [Costco Gas Station Hours of Operation](#)
 - [Pewdiepie's Net Worth](#)
 - [Another Blue Apron Review](#)
 - [Motley Fool by Thousandaire](#)
 - [Ways To Make Money on the Side](#)
 - [Johnny Depp Net Worth](#)
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Conserve Water & Save Money

Since it's the middle of summer in my zone 7 garden right now I thought it might be good to review some principles of watering our gardens & trees. If you're paying a monthly water bill, you don't want to waste money and when you do water, you should be getting the most for your money by watering efficiently.

First, for those of you with lawns, there are some rules of thumb to use when trying to keep that grass lush and green during the summer months:

- When watering your lawn, water slow, long and deep. A sprinkler should spread water evenly and slowly. Set out sprinklers in the cooler parts of the day to cut down on evaporation.
- Run off is considered very detrimental to your water use as well as your soil, so watch your sprinkler to see you're not watering the driveway, or sending nutrients from your topsoil down the drain.
- Lawns require an inch of water weekly for best growth, either from rain or irrigation or both. Rather than buy a rain gauge, use a coffee can to measure the amount of water applied.
- It takes about 625 gallons of water to apply an inch to

1,000 square feet of lawn area. After watering, the soil should be saturated approximately 3 to 4 inches.

Caring for Your Gardens While Conserving Water

Watering with a hose and nozzle is not as effective as leaving a hose placed at the base of the tree or shrub. Let the water slowly soak into the soil, watering the root system, rather than the plants. The amount of time this takes will vary, depending on the make up of your soil; if in doubt, use your shovel and dig a small test hole to see how the water is being absorbed in your garden.

By making sure you do a thorough watering of the soil around the plants, you will be watering less, and saving more on your water bill. Each plant or bed should be saturated approximately once every two weeks or less depending on the weather in your area.

Many gardeners use a soaker hose system, so they are able to saturate the soil of an entire garden area without having to continually move the hose from plant to plant.

New plantings will require more frequent watering than established plants. The same type of saturating should be exercised, but once a week may be necessary for new plants.

The use of mulch around your established plantings is an excellent method of conserving water. Gardens which are exposed to the sun and drying winds without cover will dry out rapidly and you will find it difficult to do a good job watering and creating strong healthy root systems.

Use caution when mulching brand new plantings, some mulch products will burn small plants. Simply clear a circle around the plant until it takes hold, then move the mulch in closer to cover the root system, not necessarily up to the base of

the plant.

Some of the more effective materials used for mulching are peat moss, wood chips, straw, salt marsh hay, sawdust, pine needles, hay, leaf mold, compost, dried bark and leaves. You will find you use much less water if you have at least a 2" layer of mulch. Again, digging a test hole in the garden is the only way to really know how your watering and mulching system is doing.

With many communities exercising watering restrictions, it is becoming more apparent we all need to conserve this valuable resource. By combining mulching and smart watering techniques we can each do our part to adhere to local conservation guidelines as well as keep our water bills in check.

Read More:

[The Best Piggy Banks That Can Help Teach Kids Money Management Skills](#)

Cats & Your Garden

One of the things that many gardeners dislike is having cats visit their garden. If you would like to keep cats away from your garden, there are some frugal steps that you can take that can help relieve the situation:

First, remove the poop. I know...icky! If you don't, however, the cats will think the area is theirs & they will just continue using your garden as the litter box. You will need to keep repeating this step until you can convince the cats to use another area.

The next step is to, water, water, water your garden and then

water it again. Cats hate water, and hate wet soil too. One of your kids high powered water guns works well as a deterrent too, but you have to sit & wait for Charming Kitty to visit your garden for this to work.

Another option may be dusting the area with pepper which works for some:

- 2 parts cayenne pepper
- 3 parts dry yellow mustard
- 5 parts white flour

Mix and dust into the areas of your garden that the cat has been digging in. This has to be repeated every couple days and is not effective when raining.

Another step you can take is you can apply blood meal, which acts as a fertilizer for your soil, to your garden and apparently smells nasty to cats.

A more decorative alternative is to fill in areas your cat seems to visit with more plants or some “garden art” – even if it is only temporary until your cat loses interest in the spot. A row of stepping stones into your garden will work too, anything that covers up the bare soil.

If you don't mind the cats visiting, but simply want to keep them away from your garden plants, try leaving an area of your yard for the cats. Keep the soil worked and soft as they just love it like that which is the reason why they are always digging in just planted areas of the garden.

Another alternative to keeping cats to specific areas is to plant some catnip in other areas of your yard where the cats have permission to roam. By making other areas of your yard attractive to the cats, they will likely leave your gardens alone.

If your problem is that cats are climbing in planters to nap

or dig, you can cut a piece of chicken wire & lay over the top of the pot or planter until the plants come up and it becomes too full for the kitty. Remove the wire as the plants begin to come up. The chicken wire trick also works to just lay pieces of it on top of garden soil in areas you know the cats visit.

With persistence, you and your cat can enjoy your garden together and if it's your neighbor's cat, perhaps you can convince it to head back home.

Is Organic Gardening Frugal?

Let's think back to our grandparents' gardens, whether they were full of geraniums or rows of carrots or beans; my guess is all of their gardens were grown organically. I can't remember any of them mixing up chemicals to add to their potted plants or their garden beds...but I do remember huge blossoms and giant veggies. Hmmm, what was their secret?

Only in the last couple of decades have we been pressed to purchase chemicals for our gardens. If we return to gardening practices of old (using natural products as fertilizer and practicing companion planting to ward off bugs and critters), we will be gardening organically. When you get down to basics, the natural way will always save you time and money.

The rules of organic gardening are few and they're quite simple:

- Start with good soil. Invest your money here in this category, enriching your soil every year if possible. Remember, earth worms make the best soil of all & they are FREE. Most county extension offices will do (or send out kits) to evaluate soil samples. This way, you will

know what your particular garden is lacking and just what you need to add to make it healthy.

- Healthy soil makes for healthy plant roots. Roots like aerated soil, full of nutrients and water. Those little worms can accomplish most of this too! Mulching will insure that your plants don't have to compete with weeds for the water, as well as cutting down on the amount of watering you need to do. Mulch can be newsprint, old carpet pieces, straw, grass clippings or shredded tree limbs and plant debris that had been growing on your own property.
- Healthy roots make for healthy plants and healthy plants resist drought, disease & pests, so you won't need to buy sprays, dusts and other chemicals for your garden.

When you look at it from this perspective, the simplicity and lack of needing all the chemical treatments that cost so much makes organic gardening an extremely frugal way to garden.

Frugal Container Garden



Pots and planters can be an expensive item if you're planning on venturing into [container gardening](#). Instead of heading to the garden store, or the warehouse stores, think creatively. When you realize that you can put a plant in almost anything that holds dirt

and has some sort of drainage system, the possibilities for inexpensive container gardening grow exponentially.

Start by deciding if you need the containers to be decorative as well as useful since this will influence where you start looking for ideas. If you are OK with a simple and utilitarian look, then start gathering up things like:



- Plastic Buckets – Any size will work. The only thing you need to do is to punch some holes in the bottom or sides (if that is easier). Black buckets will hold the heat more which is great for northern gardens, but might not be recommended for warmer climates.
- Old Tires – I love using these to put my rhubarb plants in. I keep stacking tires on them as the stalks get longer forcing them up to the light. Again, the black tends to hold heat and act like a greenhouse of sorts for my plants.
- Rolls of Wire Fencing – Simply make a tube, wire shut, cut to the height you want and then fill with dirt & mulch. This is a wonderful way to grow potatoes and if you keep covering up the plant, your veggies will be above ground when it's time to harvest, eliminating the digging.



Now, if you're looking to add some interest to your garden or things that are a tad more decorative than an old tire, start by using your imagination. I've included some pictures of things I've used in my garden that aren't typical "planters," but work as such. My easy to implement rule is if I can get some dirt into it, it's a planter!

If you are not sure what might be planter possibilities you'd like to add to your garden, begin by walking around your property or digging around in the garage or shed. Look for old containers under your kitchen sink, even plastic dish pans would work. Broken pots can be tipped over in the dirt and used to "frame" a plant like it's spilling out. Cracked bird baths can be given a new job with some dirt and a layer of lush Baby Tears.

Another place that can bring container inspiration are local thrift shops and neighborhood garage sales. You can find countless treasures in these places and many of the items I've found when searching there have now found a home in my garden. Remember, if it holds dirt, it's a planter!



A tradition began in my garden when one of my kids moved out, leaving her old gardening shoes for me to dispose of. She mentioned, "You could always plant in them" and that's exactly what I did. Her shoes were such a hit, we then required kids that were leaving, to donate a pair of shoes to the gardens (since I have taken care of foster kids over the years, needless to say, there are lots of shoes scattered around the property).

My favorite has to be my dad's last pair of work boots which my mom brought to my gardens after dad died. They are planted with forget-me-nots and located at my front door.



Frugal Gardening

When it comes to your garden, you need more than just plants to keep it alive. You also need the tools to keep the garden healthy and vibrant. To take care of your garden you also need to keep your tools safe. To do that you should get a shed from [Capital Construction](#) to keep all of your tools safe from the weather. I could survive with the first five tools if I needed to be really frugal, but I expanded my list to include the last five that most people would find essential:

Shovel: You'll need a shovel and a regular round end shovel is the choice if you can only have one. There are other varieties, but a generic round end will work for most tasks: moving dirt, digging holes for new plants and dividing large plants to name just a few. There is a lot of dirt that needs to be moved when you have a garden making the shovel the number one tool on the list.

Hoe: Again, there are many different kinds of hoes to choose from and if you can only get one, opt for a basic model. While there are lots of the fancy kinds of hoes, anything with moving parts doesn't belong on a "have to have" list. My

favorite is a forked hoe. This seems to be the easiest to maneuver in and around existing plants in my opinion.

Bucket: You don't need anything fancy here, but you do need a bucket. A free plastic bucket will work fine for steeping compost "tea", mixing potting soil, soaking the roots of a free plant – the list of uses are almost as long as my favorite plant list!

Hose: You will need to get water to whatever you plant and that will determine the length or number of hoses you need. This is one area where it can be worthwhile to pay a bit more for a quality hose since I have found the cheaper ones I have had over the years just didn't pass muster. You want a hose that doesn't kink up and one that will "behave" when it's coiled up.

Spade & Cultivator: If you are planning on any container gardening, a hand held spade and a cultivator (or something similar) are a necessity. You could substitute these with kitchen type serving utensils like large serving spoons and a fork found at a thrift store if you're in a big pinch. You'll probably need to bend the handles to make them function as garden tools, but they will do the job.

Those are the essential tools you'll need. The next 5 you could probably get by with if it was absolutely necessary, but these are still well worth the investment if given a choice:

Wheelbarrow: A wheelbarrow comes in extremely handy to haul compost, trimmings, soil, etc. You could substitute a wheelbarrow with a tarp which might be cheaper to begin with, but it will wear out with repeated use. You could also use a free 5 gallon bucket if you are working in a small yard, patio or deck area.

Watering Can: This device is especially nice when mixing fertilizers and other such things so you can place the mixture exactly where you want it. Buckets work, but it's hard to

regulate how much you're pouring that way.

Markers: If you want to know what you have planted and where it is, you'll need to mark where you planted everything. There are many plant/row markers on the market, but the most frugal ones I've come across are plastic knives. A big box of these are fairly inexpensive, and if you're really frugal, collect them from the next potluck you attend. They can last a couple seasons at a minimum and much longer if you're careful. They come with a nice flat surface to write on, the rain won't hurt them and you're not out a ton of money if they get lost in the garden or accidentally they end up in the compost pile.

Garden Stakes: You can buy these at any garden center or you can be creative and come up with frugal alternatives. I have several sizes, small (18") to large (5'). They are convenient to mark rows or individual plants, stake up plants that require support or you can use several in a row to string twine between, creating a support for plants like sweet peas.

A Tarp: I know I mentioned this as a substitute for the wheelbarrow, but it has enough uses in a garden that I thought it deserved its own number. I'll use it if I'm digging a hole to plant a large bush or tree so that the dirt that comes out of the hole is not put on the lawn or on top of other plants in the garden. It's also a great way to move a large bush or tree once you get it dug up. Spreading a tarp out on a picnic table would make a great temporary planting area and it helps keep the mess contained.

Happy Gardening, no matter what size & scope your corner of the world is.

Vinegar Uses In Garden



VINEGAR USES

In Garden

www.FRUGALGARDENING.COM

1. **Clay Pot Cleaning:** Vinegar will remove the white salt buildup on old clay pots. Simply soak the affected areas in full strength vinegar.

2. **Kill Grass:** Undiluted vinegar will kill grass between bricks and sidewalk cracks. Simply spray where needed.

3. **Kill Weeds:** Spraying full strength vinegar on weeds will kill them – be careful not to spray it on the surrounding grass as it will kill that too.



4. **Deter Ants:** Spray vinegar around doors, appliances, and along other areas where ants are known to gather and the vinegar will keep them away.

5. **Keep Cats Away:** Vinegar will help keep cats away from areas you don't want them. Sprinkle vinegar on any areas where you don't want the cat walking, sleeping, or scratching.

6. **Freshen Cut Flowers:** Vinegar will help fresh cut flowers last longer. Add 2 tablespoons of vinegar and 1 teaspoon sugar for each quart of water.

Courtesy of Treva