



# Healthy Lawn & Garden Practices & Principles

Since 1995, SOCRRRA and SOCWA have worked in cooperation with Oakland County MSU Extension, Wayne County MSU Extension, and the Metropolitan Detroit Landscape Association to identify the basic principles and practices for environmentally-sound home garden and lawn care. Principles and practices include:

## **Principle #1: Build fertile soil with organic matter**

- Use compost to enrich your soil.
- Use natural mulches to reduce weeds, moderate soil temperatures, retain water, and help sustain soil life.

## **Principle #2: Select plants suited for the site and climate conditions**

- Identify site conditions before planting: sun vs. shade; exposure to wind; drainage; soil texture; etc.

## **Principle #3: Diversify the garden to encourage beneficial insects and build natural pest resistance**

- Select plants which are pest-resistant and disease-resistant.
- Mix and diversify plantings to discourage pest infestations.
- Periodically move or rotate flowers and vegetables to encourage a diversity of soil microorganisms and nutrients.
- Include some native plants in the garden. Natives often require less water.

## **Principle #4: Provide nutrients and water to sustain healthy plants**

- Don't guess...soil test!
- Use slow-release fertilizers which save time, protect water quality, and gradually release nutrients over the growing season.

## **Principle #5: Recycle yard clippings on-site**

- Make compost with shredded leaves (50%); green clippings (25%); and soil or compost (25%). Keep the pile moist and periodically mix the materials.
- Use leaves and grass clippings as a natural mulch.

## **Principle #6: Minimize the use of insecticides, herbicides and other pesticides.**

### **Practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM).**

- Select pest-resistant plant varieties.
- If disease and pest problems occur, consider removing the plant. Otherwise, consider all options and select the least-toxic control.
- Establish a threshold of tolerance for pests and plant damage. Identify the problem before initiating treatment.