

**Climate Proof Your Garden!**

Climate change is having an increasing impact on our daily lives, and this includes how well plants grow and survive in our gardens.

As you are probably aware, our theme this year is ‘Climate Proof Your Garden!’. To support you in doing this, we have put together this leaflet with a few ideas of what you can do to keep your plants growing and thriving.

**Implications Of Climate Change on Our Gardens**

1. Warmer springs and autumns will extend the growing season. This means that some species of plants will flower earlier. A longer growing season will also create the need for more cutting back, mowing and weeding or a different selection of plants.
2. An increase in sunlight and a possible reduction in cloud cover. It is therefore important to increase areas of shade in our gardens.
3. An increase in rainfall and in some areas extreme rainfall, might increase the rate that nutrients are washed out of the soil.
4. An increase in dry spells through the year. Methods of capturing water will need to be considered during periods of rain.
5. A change in climate will alter the distribution of pests and pollinators.

All these changes will impact when gardeners start to grow things and will also affect their choice of plants. Creating healthy soil by adding compost or mulch will be essential. This will enable the soil to drain more effectively after heavy rainfall and the soil will be able to hold more water during drier times.

**So, What Can Be done?**

* **Plant a diverse range of plants**

Earlier flowering may disrupt usual pollinators, so planting a diverse range of pollinator-friendly plants will result in extended flowering times. Salvias, for example, have a long flowering time and are good nectar-sources for pollinators. Watch out for ‘Nectar-rich’, ‘Pollinator-friendly’ and ‘Bee-friendly' labels when buying new plants and seeds. Sudden downpours can threaten some plants not tolerant of wet conditions. Try Symphytum officinale, known as Comfrey. It tolerates both wet and dry and you can make a natural fertilizer known as ‘comfrey tea’ from its leaves.

* **Provide shade**

Planting trees and hedgerows will help to provide welcome shade. Planting native species will have the additional benefit of providing habitats and food for insects and birds throughout the year. Species you could consider include, Hawthorn, Holly, Field Maple, and Hazel. However, as climate change develops and wildlife moves further north, it will be possible and necessary to introduce plants traditionally thought not hardy enough for the north of the UK: plants such as Phillyrea, Genista and Quercus ilex.

Hedges can also help reduce pollution, slow the flow of wind and rain through your garden, **provide shelter for wildlife and help to regulate temperature through shading and cooling.**

As well as natural shade, introducing awnings or pergolas into the garden will also provide shady areas.

* **Effective management of water in the garden**

Promoting the collection of rainwater through child-safe water butts and other containers will help to preserve plants and their growth and encourage the use of watering cans rather than hoses.

PVC pipe drainage can be used to direct water away from plants if they are getting too much water. It is simple to install - dig a simple channel and put a pipe with holes inside; cover the pipe with gravel.

Holes in an old hose pipe can create a simple drip irrigation system – but don’t put too many holes in one end of the hose, or very little or no water at all will reach the other end!

* **Create a rain garden**

Any water butt overspills can be connected to rain gardens. A rain garden is a shallow depression with absorbent yet free draining soil and is planted with vegetation that can withstand occasional temporary flooding.

Ideas for creating a rain garden can be found on the RHS website, <https://www.rhs.org.uk/garden-features/rain-gardens>

* **Composting**

Adding compost to garden soil helps to replenish important plant nutrients that are washed out by heavy rainfall. It also helps to improve soil structure, allowing you to grow a wider range of plants successfully.

It is a good learning experience, and much better for the planet, to make your own compost from vegetable peelings and garden waste.

Green, or ‘living’, manures are also beneficial. These are grown by sowing seeds such as Blue Lupins over bare garden soil in the Autumn. The plant cover will protect the soil from Winter storms as well as adding extra nutrients when dug into the soil in early spring.

* **Grass cutting**

**Let grass grow longer**, as this creates a cooler layer near to the ground, shading insects and protecting the soil from drying out; or leaving grass clippings to rot into the soil as a natural alternative. Mow paths through uncut sections during the summer term, cutting it all back in time for the Autumn.

We hope that this leaflet will be useful to you in battling the effects of climate change.

Written by Christine on behalf of the Yorkshire Gardens Trust.