



# PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE GUIDE

"EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GET GROWING"

**GO  GROW**  
gardening made easy



# Overview

We know you can't wait to dig into your GO N GROW pre-planned garden! Whether you're a seasoned green thumb, or if you're a budding gardener, this guide is designed to provide you with a foundation of everything you need to be successful!

Each of the professionally designed GO N GROW gardens is tailored to appeal to your unique lifestyle

and landscape-- including selections that thrive in shade, a native plant garden, a delectable kitchen garden, and even a habitat for pollinators and wildlife. By incorporating the following guidelines in your new garden, you have the potential to create an ecologically friendly oasis that is designed to make efficient use of your time, your wallet, and our natural resources!

## BONUS

Your GO N GROW garden was also designed to help provide ecological benefits in addition to helping you create a relaxing outdoor space for entertainment and recreation.






## Pitfalls to Avoid

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for landscapes to be over-watered, over-fertilized or over-applied with pesticides. These practices can be harmful to your landscape, our water resources, and the beneficial wildlife that call our community home. Once established, your new garden is well adapted to the climate and soils of our region and will probably need less care than you might think.

## Selecting the Proper Location

### SUNLIGHT

The first step is to identify the spots with the proper corresponding sun or shade conditions on your property:

-  The Edible Box is designed to thrive in Full Sun to Part Sun conditions.
-  The Native Plant Box is designed to thrive in Full Sun to Part Sun conditions.
-  The Shade Box is designed to thrive in Part Shade to Full Shade conditions.
-  The Pollinator Box is designed to thrive in Full Sun to Part Sun conditions.
-  Don't worry, we'll help you find the right spot in YOUR landscape!

Included with your pre-planned garden are sample designs to choose from: a 16' X 16' corner bed, a 25' X 5' bed that works backed up along a fence or wall, or (for the Pollinator, Texas Native and Shade gardens) a 14' wide circle. Each have been pre-designed to

offer a layering of heights and provide contrasting colors and textures for year-round interest. Each garden plan utilizes easy-to-grow native or adapted plants that give back to you and the environment.

Choose a location that works with your favorite design or use the same principals to come up with your own custom design based on your specific site conditions.



The orientation of your home and landscape in relationship to the sun is particularly important. In most cases, the west side of the home will receive the brunt of the blistering afternoon sun during the hottest part of the day-- while the east side of the home will likely receive less- intense morning sunlight. The southern orientation usually receives more sunlight for the greater part of the year, with the north-facing landscapes often receiving more shade-- as the sun may be blocked by buildings, fences, or trees. Avoid planting the Edible, Texas Native or Pollinator gardens in spots that receive less than 5 hours of sunlight per day (especially on the north eastern exposure of fences or homes). This, however, might be the perfect spot for a Shade garden!

It is important to note that the amount and quality of light on your property can change over time, especially in landscapes with maturing trees and shrubs-- or with the addition of new buildings and fences. While sun-loving plants might grow successfully in shady areas for a while, they may decline over time, becoming thinner and less dense. Sun-loving flowering plants might even stop blooming as the shade begins to encroach on areas that have typically received greater amounts of sunlight. It is tempting for many to respond to excess shade by over-watering and/or over-fertilizing plants that are better adapted to more sunlight. These poor management practices can be detrimental to your landscape and the environment in the long run and are discouraged.

### Summer



### Spring & Fall



### Winter



*Avoid planting the Edible, Texas Native or Pollinator gardens in spots that receive less than 5 hours of sunlight per day. This, however, might be the perfect spot for a Shade garden!*

**When you plant your GO N GROW garden in the right spot,  
your established plants will thrive with little effort!**



## Make Sure you Have Access to Water

In addition to finding the right sunlight conditions on your property, having access to water is equally critical -- especially during the establishment phase for your plants. When choosing your location and BEFORE you plant, make sure your proposed GO N GROW garden location has some sort of water supply nearby. This could simply be a faucet-connected hose, a soaker hose or better yet-- drip irrigation installed for increased water efficiency. For more about how much to water, check out the "Watering" section on page 8.

# Soil Prep

Before you plant, it's also a good idea to add compost and amend your soil! Healthy soil is one of the most important factors in achieving success as a gardener in Texas. The plant material above ground is a direct reflection of what lies beneath. Soil not only provides anchoring for plants, but also plays a role in moisture and nutrient availability as well. By nurturing your soil, you, in turn, nurture the plants above.

## COMPOST

Should be added to your soil to ensure the richest growing environment for your plants by improving your planting beds drainage, soil fertility, and pH levels.

### What Is It?

Compost is a nutrient rich soil conditioner consisting of broken-down organic material. It's not a fertilizer per se, but it works like fertilizer insurance. It's also a cure-all for many soil issues.

### How to Apply

For new beds, incorporate up to 1-2 inches of compost into the top 3-6 inches of your parent soil with a spade, shovel or tiller to improve drainage and increase your soil's nutrient availability. (If you have a sandier soil, compost can also serve to improve your soil's ability to hold water and prevent excess nutrient leaching.)

For existing landscape beds, consider topdressing with ¼ inch of compost before applying mulch.

### Purchasing

High quality finished compost can be purchased locally in bags or in bulk, but the composting process can (and should) be replicated at home! For more info on the right composting method for you, sign up for a composting class at [RootedIn.com](https://rootedin.com)

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An alternative method to incorporate compost, that also reduces soil disturbance and creates a weed barrier is the sheet mulching technique described on page 9. This technique also reduces the need to double dig or till in the compost.

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## LAYING OUT YOUR GARDEN

Picking and understanding a design

### Tools Needed for Best Results

Tape measure, wooden stakes and string, garden hose, shovel or hand trowel, spade fork or tiller. (optional)

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It is also helpful to have a wheelbarrow or garden cart handy to move compost and mulch.

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A row of various herbs and vegetables growing in a garden bed. From left to right, the plants are: a bushy green herb, purple basil, a leafy green herb, a small green herb, a bushy green herb, a tall green herb, a red chili pepper plant, a green onion, a leafy green herb, and a small green herb. The garden bed is brown soil, and the background is a white picket fence.

A colorful illustration of a garden bed. In the foreground, there is a layer of dark brown soil. Several plants are growing in the bed: on the left, a bushy green herb; next to it, a plant with green leaves and several bright red chili peppers; in the center, a single green onion with long, thin leaves growing out of a white bulb; to the right of the onion, a plant with large, dark green, serrated leaves; and on the far right, a small, bushy green plant. Behind the garden bed is a white picket fence with pointed tops. Each fence post has a small, round, grey object, possibly a bolt or a decorative element, attached to it. The background is a solid light blue color.



Diagram illustrating the construction of a circle on a green background. A central point is labeled "Stake". A red line segment, labeled "7' String", extends from the stake to a point on the circle's circumference labeled "Marking Tool". An arrow indicates the path "Walk in the circle marking the ground", showing the circular path traced by the marking tool.

# Proper Planting

Each of the plants in your GO N GROW box contains plant tags with colors and numbers that correspond to your chosen design. The “planting by number” garden designs are easy to follow and install, but a few simple steps will help you get growing in no time.

## When

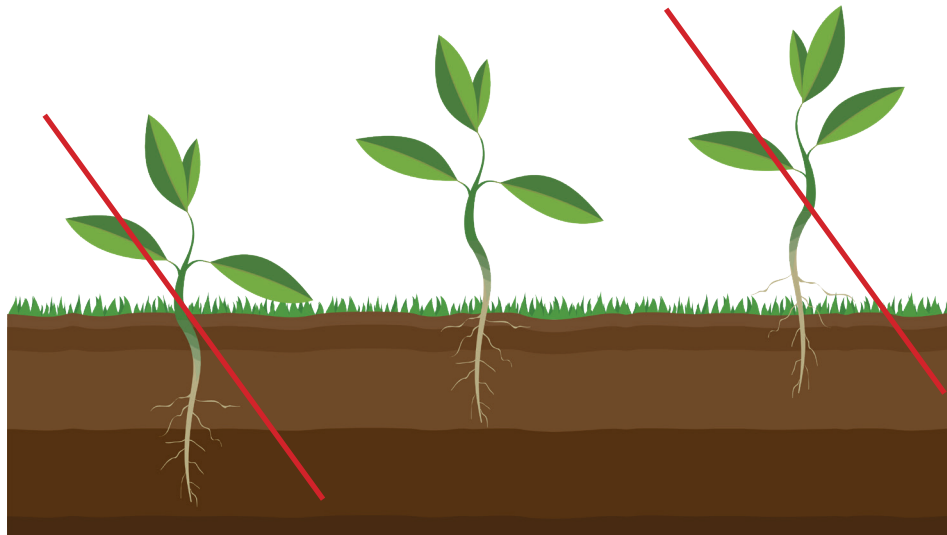
For best results, plant within 1-4 days after receiving your plants. Planting in the early morning or when temperatures cool in the evening is easier on the plants and the planter!

## Plant Spacing




Leaving the plants in their container, first lay out each plant in their correlating spot in your design, based on the colors and numbers on each plant tag. This allows flexibility to make small adjustments as needed before they are placed in the ground. Remember, that although these plants are small now, many will grow to be 2-5 foot wide at maturity. Make sure to stick to the planting designs as much as possible to give your plants plenty of room to grow!

## How to Plant

For best results, dig your holes only as deep as they are planted in the containers. Avoid planting too deep or too shallow. The holes should be dug 2 to 3 times wider than the diameter of the plant. Don't break the root ball! Simply unwrap any roots circling around in the pot.



## PLANTING TIPS

-  When removing the plant from the container, squeeze the base of the container to release the plant and avoid pulling plants from their stems.
-  Once your plant is placed into the hole, backfill with the native soil (previously removed from the hole) and gently push down to ensure good root to soil contact-- but avoid compacting the soil.
-  Be sure to water each plant in thoroughly, ensuring adequate moisture to a depth of about 6-8 inches or about 1 inch of water.

# Mulch

In addition to suppressing weeds, mulch also can buffer soil temperatures and help retain moisture. We recommend spreading 2-4 inches of mulch around your finished planted area. Pay close attention to avoid excess mulch around the base of the plants tapering off with a thinner layer where the plant meet the soil.

Now that all your plants are in the ground and mulched, the final step is making sure they have the right amount of water. Ample moisture will ensure that their immature root systems have what they

need to get established over the next couple of months. It's also important to water efficiently without over-irrigating and causing waste. Watering the right way is better for your plants and your water bill! The EPA estimates that in drier climates like North Texas, a household's outdoor water use can exceed the amount of water used for all other residential purposes. In some households, during summer, as much as 60% of a total water budget could be spent on landscape irrigation! Plus, too much water can lead to increased chances of disease and pest issues.

Incorrect



Correct



**Did you know that piling mulch against the base of a young plant can lead to pest and disease issues?**

# Watering During Establishment

Even highly adapted and water efficient flowers and shrubs need special care during the first few months after planting. But, once your garden is established it will provide long lasting benefits to people and pollinators, with little maintenance, for years to come!

## After Planting

Soak the root zone surrounding each new plant. Hand watering works well, but any method that evenly distributes water until the soil around your plants is wet (to about 6 inches deep) is ok, too.

## Check the Moisture

Check every 3-4 days by using your finger, or better yet, a soil moisture probe to make sure that there is adequate moisture. (Or more frequently during hotter, dry weather)



Apply water as needed when the top 2-3 inches of soil (underneath the mulch) begins to dry out. Once established, these plants won't need much supplemental water!



With the addition of compost and mulch you may not need to water very frequently, especially if there are timely rain events and when temperatures are cool during the spring and fall months. Water as needed if rainfall is scarce.



During the winter months, as many of the plants slow down or enter dormancy, very little supplemental irrigation will be needed. Water as needed if rainfall is scarce.



All the plants included are cold hardy to North Texas, however, it is also recommended that the planted area remains moist (not saturated) if an unusually cold weather event is predicted.

## Long-term Irrigation

While it's important to pay special attention to watering your young plants for the first few seasons, one of the main benefits of the plants that have been chosen for your GO N GROW garden is that after establishment, they are each well-adapted to the unique climate of North Texas, including our sometime sporadic rainfall patterns and excessive heat!

They will still need some water from time to time, so we've got some simple watering tips to make sure your garden looks great for years to come!



### WATER DEEPLY AND INFREQUENTLY

Once established, these native and adapted plants do a great job of tapping into the moisture lower in the soil. Watering too much or too often can cause more harm than good, especially for those with poor draining heavy clay soils.



## HOW MUCH?

In general, a good rule of thumb is to irrigate with no more than 1/2" of water per week for established native and adapted perennial flowers and shrubs, like the plants included in your GO N GROW garden. When it rains, you won't need to water at ALL!

-  In-ground irrigation systems, hose-end sprinklers, hand watering and drip irrigation or soaker hoses each put water out at different rates.
-  To find out how long it takes for your system to put out 1/2" of water try the catch can test! This easy one-time step will prevent you from over (or under) watering your garden and will ensure that the water stays in the root zone where the plants can use it-- without running down the sidewalk or driveway!

## Another Option... Sheet Mulching

Sheet mulching uses layers of recycled cardboard and newspaper (or a combination of the two) to smother existing vegetation, allowing it to break down and compost in place. This method also works great to create an effective weed barrier when establishing new planted beds. Sheet mulching also reduces the need to till which is easier on your back as well as the populations of soil organisms.

## Fertilization and Maintenance

### WEEDING

During establishment, some weeds might pop up from time to time. Weeds have the potential to compete with your young plants for water, sunlight and nutrients. The easiest and most effective way to control unwanted plants in your GO N GROW garden is through mechanical control (hand pulling). Pulling weeds with a constant yet firm movement when the soil is damp doesn't require a lot of effort and will (in most cases) control small weed infestations before they spread or set seed. This method also reduces any potential negative impacts on your pollinator community.

If weeds begin to encroach rapidly or if you do not feel like you can easily control by hand pulling or hoeing, herbicide options might be considered. Whether using organic or synthetic herbicides in your landscape, it is very important to always apply per






label instructions and avoiding overspray on nearby plant material AND especially avoid interaction with nearby pollinators. Remember that some herbicides can move through the soil as well. Take care to follow label recommendations to avoid accidental damage to other plants in the landscape.

Integrated Pest Management, or IPM, should be followed when gardening for edibles and around pollinators. For more information visit [RootedIn.com](http://RootedIn.com).

An alternative to mechanical and chemical control is the sheet mulching method to smother weeds that is outlined in the mulching section of this guide. Maintaining a 2-4 inch layer of mulch with annual or biennial applications will also work wonders at decreasing weed pressure.

## BEE KIND TO POLLINATORS

When considering using ANY pesticide in or near your Pollinator, Texas Native, Edible or Shade garden (whether organic or synthetic) follow these guidelines:

-  Use them sparingly, and only treat areas where pests (weeds, insects, diseases) are problems.
-  Always follow label recommendations to ensure correct application rates, timing, and use.
-  Choose pesticides that won't persist in the environment.
-  Time applications so that you are not spraying when pollinators are active and avoid spraying during bloom time.
-  Be aware of nearby bee colonies and avoid spraying around healthy bee populations and areas with a lot of nectar-producing plants.

## PRUNING

Depending on the severity of the winter, some evergreen plants will stay green throughout the winter months while semi-evergreen plants may show little winter dieback depending on the micro-climate in which they are planted. However, the bulk of the plants in your kit are deciduous perennials, meaning they will go dormant or may die back all the way to the ground during cooler months. Don't worry, though! Most plants are well-adapted to withstand our normal freezing temperatures and will vigorously re-sprout from either last year's branches or regrow from the ground each year. These plants are aided by the removal of last year's growth which encourages and helps rejuvenate the plant for the next growing season.

The best time to prune is generally from mid-February to mid-March, when temperatures are still cool, and your plant material is just starting to push new growth and is showing signs of spring.

When pruning back the plants in your GO N GROW garden, a good rule of thumb is to prune back the dead plant material first and discard it in your compost pile.

Using a pair of sharp hand pruners, gardening shears, or loppers, start at the top of any plant showing brown, dried tissue. Begin cutting back until you see green leaves, or green tissue in the stems in the area right underneath the bark. When you begin to see any green tissue, you can stop pruning for function and then make a few moderate pruning cuts (as needed) to shape the plant for the aesthetic look that you prefer.

Avoid over-pruning which can cause damage to the plant. Never prune back more than 1/3 of a plant that is actively growing. For plants that have died back all the way to the ground, leave 2-4 inches of last year's growth at the base of the plant as a buffer.

## DEADHEADING

Some flowers have the potential to produce more blooms if the older, spent flowers are removed. This maintenance step is certainly not critical but can be practiced as needed. Leaving the spent flowers also has its benefits as well; providing seeds to share and a potential food source for native songbirds.

## MULCHING

As the mulch in your GO N GROW garden breaks down, it adds organic matter to the soil by composting in place. This aids not only in moisture holding capacity but also improves soil structure and the ability of rainfall and irrigation water to infiltrate deeply and easily into the soil. However, it does mean that you will need to periodically top-dress with another layer of mulch to maintain that 2-4 inch layer. Consider adding ½ inch of your favorite mulch every year in spring after pruning or perhaps an inch every two years as needed.

## FERTILIZER

Although the plants in your GO N GROW garden are well-adapted to the soils of North Texas, after establishment, they may need more nutrients than compost alone can provide. A soil test is the best way to assess nutrient availability in your garden. Consider taking a soil sample every 2-3 years for a custom fertilizer recommendation based on any nutrient deficiencies on your specific site. The analysis can be used to gauge the need for and amounts of appropriate fertilizers based on your landscape management preferences.

## SPONSORS

