

# garden



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By Roger Myers

Roger Myers is the President and Founder of American Beauty Landscaping. Established in 1979, ABL is the Valley's industry leader with more than 100 national, state and local awards to its landscape design and build credit.

## Going Green

It's the latest fashion – **going green!** What does that mean? In the landscape it refers to less reliance on pesticides in the environment. It also refers to recycling yard waste such as grass, leaves and debris and to growing your own food. Using less water on your lawn, cutting the grass in the evening, without collecting clippings, are all examples of an intelligent awareness of the Earth's finite resource base.

Is it “wrong” to plant and grow shrubs, and trees, and lawn to surround your residence? Of course not. Plants put oxygen back into the air, cool the environment, filter out dust, provide shade, and a home for wildlife, and last but not least, are esthetically pleasing while providing us with comfort, and beauty.



But what about the habit of pesticide use to achieve proper health? \*In a 1991 study the Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association installed the URI Botanical Gardens. They don't use pesticides, and have only lost two plants in 19 years!

The first step to pest tolerance is choosing plants that are well adapted to the area. The plants are healthy and very pest-tolerant. They grow in the same climate, soil, moisture and light, with heights and widths that fit the space. Some plants have natural protection against insects like hairs, or thick skin.

Plants that are stressed by conditions are more prone to insects and diseases.

The second step to a pest-tolerant landscape is to find out which pests are in your area, and choose ornamentals that aren't susceptible to them.

Third, aerate the soil before planting. A landscape design may be beautiful, but if the soil is compacted, ornamentals will always be stressed because of the poor drainage and lack of air.

### LESS MAINTENANCE

Pest-tolerant ornamentals need less maintenance than others. Monitoring plants for signs of trouble is most important. Often, improper maintenance due to lack of experience or training can cause more problems. Too much fertilizer stresses plants, flushes soft growth which attracts insects.

Over watering also causes problems. Fungus becomes active in wet soils, but under watering is stressful too.

Over pruning causes stress also. You shouldn't shear plants, as that takes away their natural growth and shape which is why you bought it in the first place! Don't make unnecessary work.

If this sounds confusing, perhaps you should call American Beauty Landscaping for some friendly advice, and GO GREEN!



Enjoy the Summer, see you next month –  
Roger A. Myers, President  
American Beauty Landscaping, Inc.

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