



6960 Burkittsville Road • Middletown, MD 21769 • PH: 301-204-1521 • info@backyardbounty.net • www.backyardbounty.net

Caring for your new garden

A garden is a living, growing and changing space. Unlike a newly decorated room, your garden will look its best after a few years as soils improve, plant roots anchor in the ground and plants settle into their new space. Over the next 3 years, your garden will be in an establishment period- plants tend to settle in over year one, grow slowly in year two, and begin to look like they've always been there by year three.

Like people, plants are affected by their environment and can be challenged with diseases, bugs and animals, bad storms and weeds. Healthy, well cared for plants, can handle many challenges, so your goal is to minimize stress on plants in your garden's early years.

Here's a quick guide for what to expect and how to care for your plants and garden:

Watering:

Quantity: Plants need about 1.5" of water a week. New plants, plants in soil that drains quickly or are located under a tree or on a slope require more watering- we suggest 2" for these plants, especially during hot summer spells. We recommend you use a rain gauge so you can measure how much rain has fallen on your garden. If it does not rain at least 1.5" of water in a week, be prepared to water your garden.

Frequency: Better to water deeply 1-2x/week than mist on a daily basis- this approach will encourage plants to send their roots out in search of water. A good way to know how long to water with a sprinkler is to leave the rain gauge in the garden while you run the sprinkler and time how long it takes for the rain gauge to fill to 1". Soaker hoses usually need to run about 1 hour before an inch of water is released. **Be careful:** overwatering can cause as many problems as under-watering.

When: Water in the morning so that dew left on leaves can dry during the day to minimize disease problems.

Observing:

Spend time getting to know the plants in your garden. Watch out for yellowing leaves during the growing season which may be a sign of over-watering, and for wilting leaves which may indicate a plant is drying out. Notice if a storm has broken off branches or a pest is munching away on your plant. Many times, plants will be able to overcome these environmental challenges, but if you are concerned, call or email.

Mulching:

We have mulched your garden with shredded pine mulch or leaf compost. Mulch helps soil retain moisture and helps keep weeds down. When re-applying mulch, avoid shredded hardwood mulch, except in rain gardens. Never use hardwood mulch around acid loving plants like azaleas and never apply treated or dyed mulch to your garden. In big storms, you may experience 'mulch movement' or see water paths through garden beds. This is normal in new gardens as plants have not had a chance to spread and settle in their roots BB designs gardens with dense ground layers to minimize the need for mulch once the garden is mature, and the dense ground layer in place of mulch will also minimize mulch movement over time.

Fertilizing:

We recommend a natural fertilization program for your garden: fall mulching with leaf mulch and 2 annual applications of compost tea will keep your plants vigorous and help them combat pests and disease. Other fertilization is rarely necessary if you use natural cycles and products to feed your soil and plants.



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Weeding:

Don't be surprised when weeds show up in your new garden. While we've pulled visible weeds at installation, it is likely that weed seeds remain in the soil and may sprout in the new growing season. Long term, improving the soil in your garden through yearly topdressing with compost, and a full ground cover layer will suppress weeds. Here are two common weeds that we see in new gardens and suggested approaches to managing them:

- Maple and other trees seeding in the garden: When you see the 'helicopters' start to fall from the Maple trees in the area, it is time to pull out an electric blower and blow these seedlings out of garden beds before they settle and root. Maple seedlings will happily start to root in mulch as well as soil, so a mulch layer alone will not keep them in check. Pull any young plants as early as possible if you don't get the 'helicopters' out with a blower.
- Yellow Nutsedge: This is a weed that looks like a grass. It is a perennial weed, meaning it does not die after a season. It reproduces primarily by underground tuber called nutlets, that form at the end of underground stems, called rhizomes. Remove it by digging out as much of the root and tuber as possible. This weed will begin to emerge in April or May and thrives in the heat of summer, so pull it as early in the season as possible and take care to remove as many rhizomes and nutlets and as you can.

Critters:

Deer don't always read the list of plants rated 'Deer Resistant' - When deer are starved and your garden is on a deer route, you may notice that deer eat plants they might not normally eat- There are a variety of deer sprays approved for organic land care- many made from rotten eggs- so the smell is not great. We are particularly frustrated by deer eating new growth on shrubs and trees that they will not eat once the plant has matured and the branches have become tougher. Installing a barrier like a net draped over the shrub, or spraying the plant until the stems mature can prevent this type of damage. Rabbits eating away at the garden- many deer repellants effectively repel rabbits also. Barriers with fencing dug into the ground so rabbits can't burrow underneath are the best long term way to keep rabbits out.

And the Good Stuff:

In addition to the beauty of a variety of new shrubs, grasses and flowers, your garden provides food and shelter for birds and butterflies and helps to keep polluted stormwater from entering our streams and the Chesapeake Bay. We hope you'll have lots of time to enjoy the flowers birds and butterflies that begin to visit and live in your yard.

Thanks for hiring us,

The Backyard Bounty Team



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