



## A Sustainable Landscape

Find out what sustainable landscaping can do for your business.

By Robert McGarvey



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### AVAILABLE AT LOWE'S

- Organic Plant Food
- Organic Garden Soil
- Organic Soil Treatment
- Organic Potting Mix

Sustainable landscaping has become a profitable area for [landscape professionals](#). "Green gardening is moving beyond being a trend into being the mainstay," says Ted Ning, a director of LOHAS, a company that promotes lifestyles of health and sustainability. "Green is the perfect marketing tool because it quickly lets you stand out from your competition."

### Get Started

Those who are new to sustainable landscaping can start by becoming more conscious about what they plant, where they plant and how they fertilize, says Marvin Duren, owner of Marvin's Organic Gardens, a nursery and landscaping service in Lebanon, Ohio. For example, instead of planting a lawn with grass in Phoenix, for instance, choose native plants that are naturally resistant to the conditions in the area and are already acclimated to the local environment. That way, you'll reduce the need to use harmful pesticides, and save water and energy.

Although cost concerns might prevent some contractors from adopting organic products, consumers interested in purchasing and investing in green products and services tend to be less sensitive to price than other consumer groups, Duren says. Organic groceries, for instance, usually sell at a premium prices.

A second myth: Becoming sustainable means tearing out existing landscaping. But according to Duren, going green means adopting a mindset of sustainable gardening that does not use herbicides, pesticides, synthetic fertilizers (composting is preferred), and, wherever possible, uses organically grown plants that are well-suited to the local climate and conditions. "You can make the transition in a day," Duren says. "You stop using products that endanger the environment and you use safer ones."

But one stumbling block is that there is no national organization that certifies green landscapers, says Cloud Conrad, owner of landscaper Garden the Planet in Atlanta. Some agricultural colleges offer such programs, but this mainly is a DIY process of learning what's green and what isn't.

Do some research, ask established green landscapers how they do it, and sustainability will swiftly become clear. Don't overestimate how hard it is to learn this because professionals say it is simple.

Make sure you're well-educated. "Consumers are savvy, they will know if a landscaper really is green," Ning says. "If you say you are green, you will have to demonstrate it."

- [Composting 101](#)

Organic gardening isn't that much harder than conventional gardening, Duren says. For starters, people gardened organically for thousands of years, and they did well enough so that we are all still here. Secondly, organic gardening produces better results for the earth and for customers. "We start by building the soil and once we do that, raising plants the green way genuinely is no harder than the other route," he says.

But making a landscape environmentally friendly does introduce some new problems, such as removing weeds without herbicides, or insects without pesticides. But these are problems with well-established solutions that green gardeners know well.