

Island Grown Initiative

Ten Essential Steps to Regenerative Gardening

1. **Observe** the natural world and take advantage of what it has to offer. Start with your own backyard. Garden how nature gardens.
2. **“Do Not Disturb”** to promote soil integrity: avoid tilling and soil compaction.
3. **Compost**: Make your own plant food in your own backyard so you don’t have to drive somewhere to buy soil amendments in plastic bags that came from far away.
4. Reduce or **eliminate your lawn footprint**: Most lawns use fossil fuels via mowing, water, and fertilizer; consider replacing some or all your lawn with lawn alternatives such as native groundcovers, pollinator habitat, and edible gardens.
5. **Keep the ground covered** at all times to nurture soil life and prevent carbon loss: Mulch with seaweed, decomposed wood chips, and leaves; plant multiple species of cover crops to keep living roots in the soil for as much of the year as possible.
6. Catch **rain water** off your roof and use it to water your plants.
7. **Source plants and seeds locally** – utilize seeds from the West Tisbury Library’s community seed bank, participate in their spring plant swap, and look to local plant growers like Polly Hill and Middletown.
8. Plant pollinators such as bee balm, butterfly weed, and cone flower to attract and support **bee** colonies. Make friends with bugs and birds.
9. Enhance soil life and plant health by adding **microbial inoculants** to new plantings and transplants. SBS and the Allen Farm sell mycorrhizal fungal inoculants.
10. **Save A Tree / Plant a tree**: Increase perennial plantings on your property! Try adding a perennial plant to your yard every year for yourself, for someone’s birthday, for someone you know that may be going through a rough patch. Instead of buying a tree, consider saving a tree. Drive down a dirt road and you will notice small saplings on the edge of the road. In a few years those little trees will most likely be cut down for growing into the road. Bring a shovel and a bucket, dig up the sapling(s) and plant where it will have room to grow. The best time of year to do this is March 21 – May 21.

Resources to Learn More about Regenerative Gardening, Farming and Land Care

Books:

Edible Forest Gardens, David Jacke and Eric Toensmeier

Gaia's Garden, Toby Hemenway

Kiss the Ground, Josh Tickell

Growing a Revolution: Bringing Our Soil Back to Life, David R. Montgomery

Dirt to Soil, Gabe Brown

Braiding Sweetgrass, Robin Wall Kimmerer

Mycorrhizal Planet, Michael Phillips

Websites/articles:

- Excellent backyard regenerative gardening guide from NOFA Mass:
<https://www.nofamass.org/sites/default/files/The-Carbon-Sequestering-Garden.pdf>
- A New England nursery that specializes in perennial, edible food forest plants:
<http://www.foodforestfarm.com/shop>
- Overview on soil carbon sequestration from Northeast Organic Farming Association:
<https://www.nofamass.org/carbon>
- 12 Tips for A Thriving Edible Garden from Morag Gamble
https://gallery.mailchimp.com/63570cc26702f371d79549097/files/0aff26aa-1540-4369-8e3e-d4b9ef9a941a/12_tips_for_a_thriving_edible_garden_book_compressed.pdf?mc_cid=589ce84a01&mc_eid=7df10edb59
- Backyard composting guide from the Rodale Institute:
<https://rodaleinstitute.org/blog/backyard-composting-basics-a-cheatsheet/>
- 9 simple steps for sheet mulching: <https://www.chelseagreen.com/2014/9-simple-steps-to-sheet-mulching/>
- The Agroforestry Research Trust is a great source of information on food forests, and even offers an online food forest gardening course: <https://www.agroforestry.co.uk/>
- Food Forest Open Source Hub: Tons of great shared resources here about edible forest gardening: <https://www.onecommunityglobal.org/food-forest/>

Videos:

An Invitation to Wildness, showing a well-established Australian edible food forest:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GJFL0MD9fc>

How to create a new no-dig garden bed: https://permaculturenews.org/2017/01/27/low-double-dig-gardens/?mc_cid=c3aec59290&mc_eid=0c08ae86ec

Reduce your lawn footprint with sheet mulching: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PBOYm_iXmc

Soil Testing:

Logan Labs does excellent and thorough soil tests: <https://www.loganlabs.com/>

Woods End Laboratories: www.woodsend.com