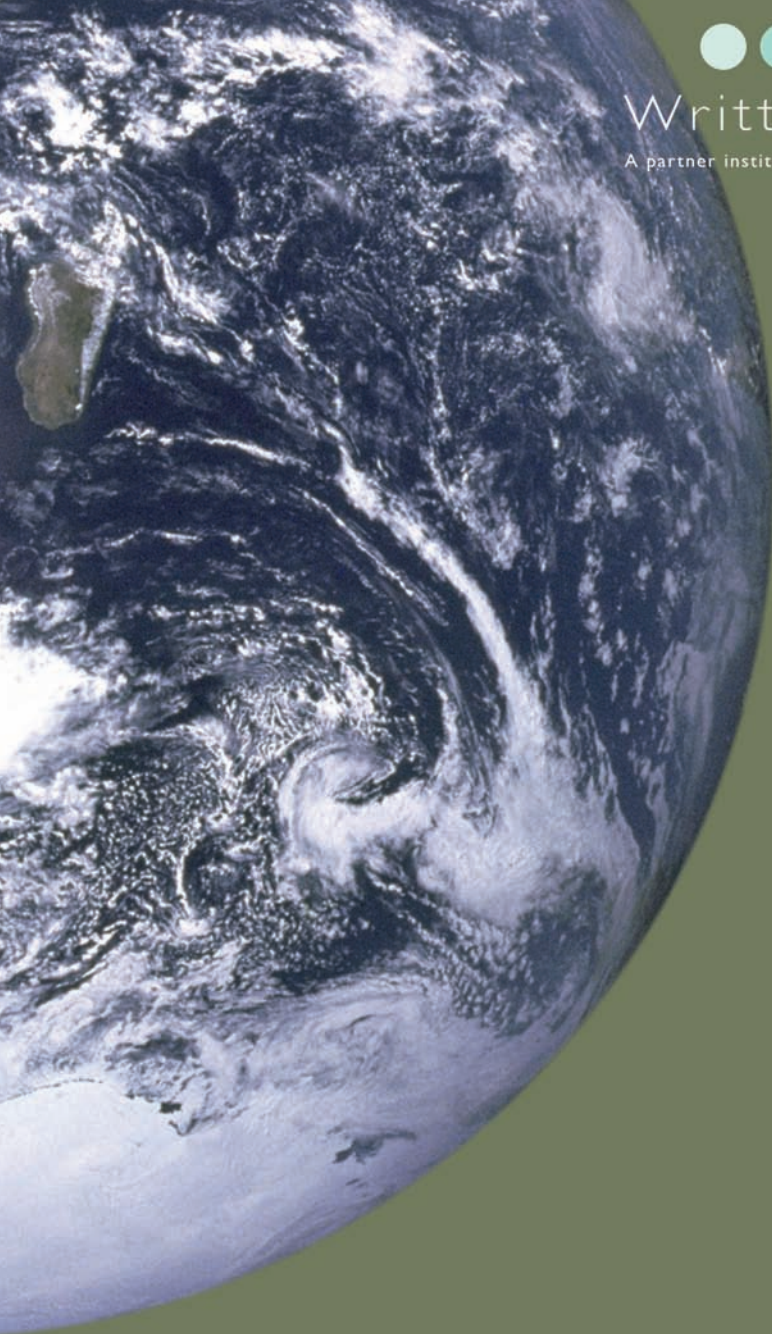




Writtle COLLEGE

A partner institution of the University of Essex



How Green is My Garden?

RHS Chelsea Flower Show Exhibit 2007

Green Gardening & Climate Change

How do we Know the Climate is Changing?

Sometimes it can be difficult to discern long-term trends in the apparently random day-to-day variations that we call weather. Long-term records suggest it is happening though. Many countries have monitored various aspects of the weather, which have been collated and analysed to give a bigger picture of how the weather - and climate - has changed over time.

If it is Getting Warmer Does that Mean No More Frosts?

Both climate and weather are notoriously difficult to predict with pinpoint accuracy. Britain has a maritime climate where the seasonal variations are not as extreme as in areas affected by continental air masses, such as central-southern Siberia which is also on about the same latitude as Britain. The mild climate in Britain can still be interrupted occasionally by cold Arctic air in winter and hot subtropical air in summer.

The natural variability of our weather means that the temperature is always going to vary over the short term, whereas climate change occurs over longer periods. The turning point between winter and spring is mostly a period of unsettled weather and this may yet continue to bring the occasional icy blast to our shores for a long time yet.

Will it be Possible to Grow More Exotic Plants?

Over time, the mixture of plants that we grow in gardens may have to change. Though it doesn't necessarily mean a shift toward tropical plants, as Britain is still a long way north!

Garden plants may need to be increasingly tolerant of higher summer temperature and water shortages, as irrigation ceases to be an option. Collecting and treating water for domestic use is costly; both in respect of water bills but also to the environment. You might avoid the worst of this by installing a water butt, which will catch rainwater from a roof. This pure water is the ideal thing for your plants and as it takes less water from reservoirs, rivers and underground sources, it benefits the wider environment.



Waterwise Planting Tips

- When planning a new garden, check to see if the plants are drought tolerant and avoid any that require a lot of water
- Herbaceous plants can be drought prone in the first year but soon root deeper and are more tolerant in subsequent years
- Shrubs and trees may also be vulnerable in their early years but rapidly become better at surviving drought
- Only water new plants and always avoid watering established plants unless they show signs of real stress
- If you must water, do this when it is cooler - during early morning or evening - so as to reduce evaporation
- Use large containers for patio plants. They help reduce water use as they retain moisture better than small pots
- Group pots of plants together so as to reduce the rate at which water is lost and use a watering can rather than a hose



Encourage Wildlife for a Greener Garden

Why a Wildlife Garden is a Green Garden

Wildlife can be very specific about the type of habitat it will live in. Often, certain species are extremely sensitive to environmental disturbance and especially so where pollution is concerned.

Quite simply, the more species your garden contains, the healthier it is likely to be. Wildlife in a garden is an excellent indicator therefore of your 'green' credentials.

An Army of Garden Helpers

A vast range of creatures may take up permanent or temporary residence in a garden. Whilst a few of these are well known to us as potential pests that can damage our garden plants, the overwhelming majority will cause no harm at all.

Some species are extremely beneficial in the garden and will actually help you to control pests by eating them and keeping their numbers down naturally. Encouraging these in the garden can have positive benefits by enabling you to reduce pesticide use.

Any garden can be enhanced through the inclusion of nest boxes or hibernation sites for these creatures; if you have room you can build a 'habitat stack' such as the one shown here.

Gardens as a Refuge for Declining Species

Domestic gardens are becoming more important than ever for wildlife as their former habitats are lost. Habitat loss is the single most important danger to wildlife, affecting not only single species, but sometimes threatening entire ecological communities.

Gardens form an important mosaic of green space, often linking urban areas with rural surrounds. This makes it easier for wildlife to travel between them. One garden may provide only a limited space for a few species to live but collectively, gardens often amount to a huge and important habitat capable of supporting large and important populations of otherwise rare species.



This is like a hibernation city for your garden wildlife, incorporating a whole range of hibernation sites in one 'multi-storey complex'. This ultimately benefits many species and can be a very decorative, if eccentric, feature in your wildlife garden.



The Real Impacts of Gardens

Your Garden and its Environmental Footprint

An Environmental Footprint is a measure of how much land and water area any activity requires to produce the resources it consumes and to absorb any resultant wastes.

In the context of a garden it could be said to be a measure of the consumption of all resources – including the disposal of waste products - that impact beyond its boundaries.

If a garden uses few outside inputs then its footprint is of course lessened. Lessening inputs is described as reduction. If items are reused, then this will also reduce its footprint.

Assessing your true environmental footprint can ultimately enable you to take personal and collective actions in support of a world where humanity lives within the means of one planet.



Buildings, Furniture and Construction – Counting the Cost

Modern tastes in landscaping mean that the garden is often a net consumer of resources in its own right.

Hard landscape materials, garden buildings and any bought items all have an environmental cost, in terms of the resources they consume but also in respect of the energy they use to collect raw materials, produce the items and of course to transport them.

Even items from sustainable sources need transporting and therefore contribute to carbon emissions.

Choose locally made items and check exactly how environmentally sound their production and trading is.

Try to reduce the need to buy items by reusing things wherever possible. Some reclaimed items can sometimes be as good as new ones and are well worth considering before you go for the new option.

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Ways to Improve your Green Credentials

What's in Your Shed?

Many of us have a tendency to put things in the shed only to forget about them. Some of these are innocuous but often our sheds hide garden chemicals now banned by law.

There are many pesticides, herbicides (e.g. paraquat), paints and wood preservatives such as those based on creosote that are no longer legal to use. Many gardeners are unaware of this, and even more surprised to find out that by possessing them they are actually in breach of the law.

Never try to dispose of them yourself but contact your local authority waste department for advice.

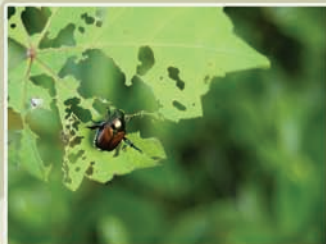
Alien Invaders

Only around 1,500 of the 100,000 plant species grown in the UK are native. Many of these are grown overseas, resulting in cheap imports of large specimens. This trade in imported plants has doubled in the past decade.

Home owners, anxious to see results in the garden, often seek quick-fix solutions by buying in such mature plants. Common examples include trees and tree ferns that may be imported from as far away as China, Australia and New Zealand. Yet few amateur horticulturists are aware of the environmental consequences of doing this.

Many of these 'Horticultural Immigrants' carry 'uninvited guests' some of which have the capability to threaten natural and garden habitats.

Growing your own plants, preferably from seed is the best way to reduce the import of such invaders and helps to improve your green credentials.



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Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

The Three R's of green living are especially compatible with your garden and often easy to incorporate into your gardening activities.

Reduction is easily applied in respect of either inputs or waste. Quite simply, you must aim to reduce the amount of items you bring in from outside. Conversely, by reducing the amount of things you dispose of from the garden, you similarly reduce the environmental impact of your garden. This latter point also includes pollution from fumes or burning.

Reuse and recycling are also very applicable in the garden. Composting garden waste is an ideal way to do this and if you do it within the confines of your own garden it is always best. Try to recycle other things resulting from home use too. When you do buy anything, always choose an option that is recyclable or durable enough to be used again.



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Keep it On-Site

The plants in your garden often make a more negative environmental impact than you might imagine, particularly those which are transported as fully grown plants rather than as seed.

Whilst the intention here is not to discourage you from ever buying a plant, remember that the transportation of seed is much less costly in respect of fuel use than the equivalent plants would be.

Raising your own plants from seed is one of the core aspects of gardening and whilst some gardeners do appreciate how this saves them money, they rarely think that raising seed can actually have a positive environmental impact.

Each plant that you grow yourself is a positive step toward a 'greener' garden and what is more, could ultimately be seen as a measure of your own 'green gardening' credentials.

Recycle this after use



Home Growing of Food

A recent poll of almost 2,000 adults by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (Wrap) showed that as much as a third of the food we buy ends up in the bin; a staggering total of 6.7 million tons of food or 19 per cent of the total waste thrown away annually by British households.

Food production and transportation all contribute to pollution and climate change. Food dumped in landfill also contributes to climate change and takes up space in the ground.

Whilst the reasons for this are complex, producing your own fruit and vegetables at home is one way to ensure that you have plenty of food and reduce the impact of production, packaging and transport (food miles).

What's more, you can ensure that it is grown in an environmentally friendly way and if there is an excess, it can be composted and returned to the soil.



Writtle College would like to extend special thanks to the following for their help with this Exhibit:

Roof Dragon

www.roofdragon.com

Sun Newspaper

www.thesun.co.uk

JNC Landscapes

Harlow, 07973 562368

CADE

www.cade.writtle.ac.uk



Writtle College provide full and part-time University of Essex Foundation and Honours degrees and Postgraduate programmes in a variety of subjects.

Higher education Open Days are held on the following dates:

Wednesday 24 October 2007

Wednesday 14 November 2007

Wednesday 12 December 2007

Wednesday 9 January 2008

Wednesday 13 February 2008

Saturday 8 March 2008

Wednesday 2 April 2008

Wednesday 7 May 2008

Wednesday 4 June 2008

Saturday 19 July 2008

Pre-event registration is required.

For details or to order a prospectus contact:

Admissions
Writtle College
Chelmsford Essex
CMI 3RR

Tel: 01245 424200

Fax: 01245 420456

Minicom: 01245 424254

Email: info@writtle.ac.uk

www.writtle.ac.uk

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