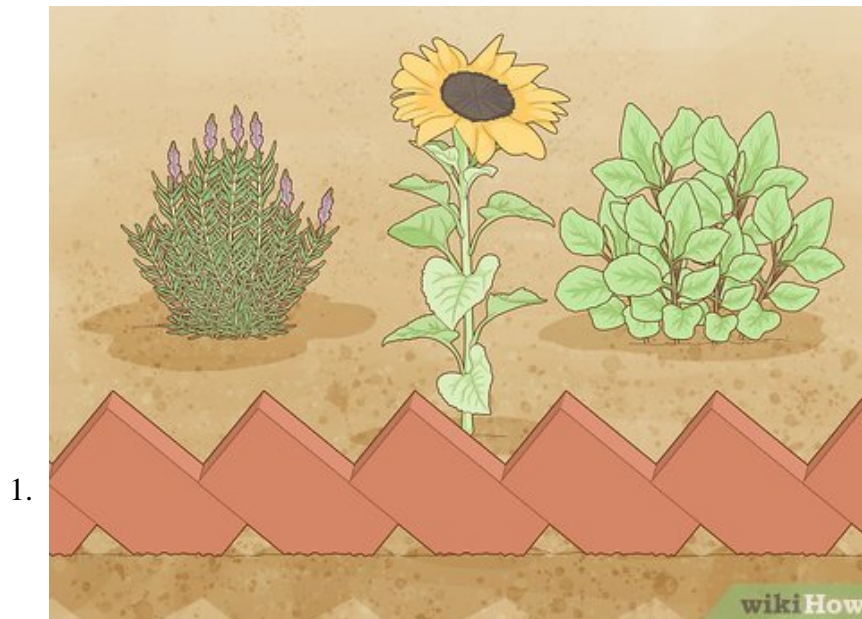


# How to Maintain a Garden

Gardens of all types can make your yard look beautiful, but they may get messy or overgrown if you don't properly maintain them. Every kind of garden has different requirements and growing needs, so make sure you use the proper equipment...

Method 1 of 3:

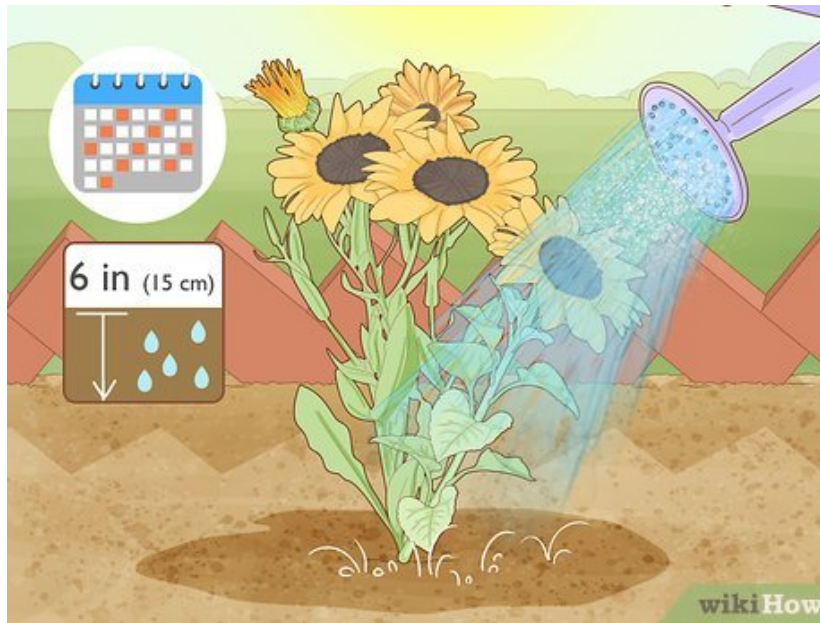
## Supporting Vegetable Beds



**Look for companion vegetables to plant together for a better harvest.** Some plants work well with others since they may repel pests or they won't compete for nutrients. As you plan out your vegetable beds, try to mix larger vegetables with smaller ones to keep them protected from the wind. Try using basil or lavender in gardens that attract pests, or plant cilantro and sunflowers to help attract beneficial insects. [1]

1. Use plants that have pungent odors, like onion or garlic, in your vegetable beds to deter other larger pests.
2. Make sure you check if plants are compatible before planting them together since they may compete for nutrients.

2.



**Water soil to a depth of 6 in (15 cm) when it dries out in the summer.** Use a trowel to dig 3 inches (7.6 cm) into the soil and touch it with your finger to see if it feels dry. If it does, slowly pour water into the garden bed and allow it to soak in the soil. Continue watering the garden until the soil feels wet at least 6 inches (15 cm) beneath the surface. Check the soil every 1–2 days to make sure it hasn't dried out again. [2]

1. Avoid overwatering the garden since it can cause your plants to develop rot and prevent healthy growth.
2. If you're able, install a drip irrigation system so the soil stays moist.
3. Raised garden beds usually dry out faster than ones that are in the ground.

3.

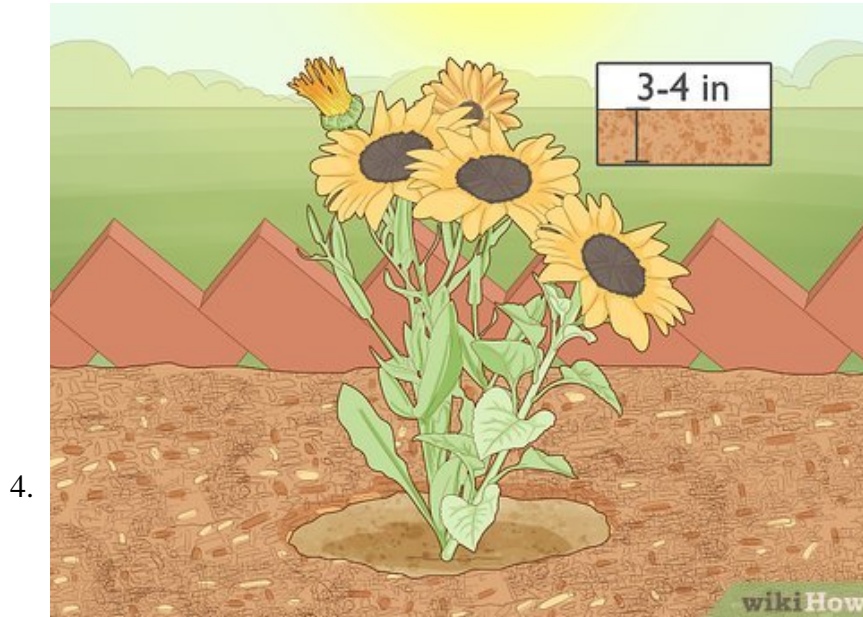


**Sprinkle 5-10-10 fertilizer on the soil 3–4 weeks after planting vegetables.** Go to your local gardening store and look for a granulated 5-10-10 fertilizer that's made for vegetable gardens. Use about 1–2 tablespoons (14–28 g) of fertilizer per plant and spread it into the soil so it's 8 inches (20 cm) away from

the vegetable stems. Water your garden immediately so the fertilizer soaks into the soil.<sup>[3]</sup>

1. Wear gloves while spreading fertilizer since it may cause skin irritation.
2. If you're growing vine plants, such as melons or squash, spread fertilizer as soon as the vines begin spreading.

**Warning:** Avoid using high-nitrogen fertilizers in beds with non-leafy vegetables, such as tomatoes, peppers, or eggplants, or else they may not grow as large.



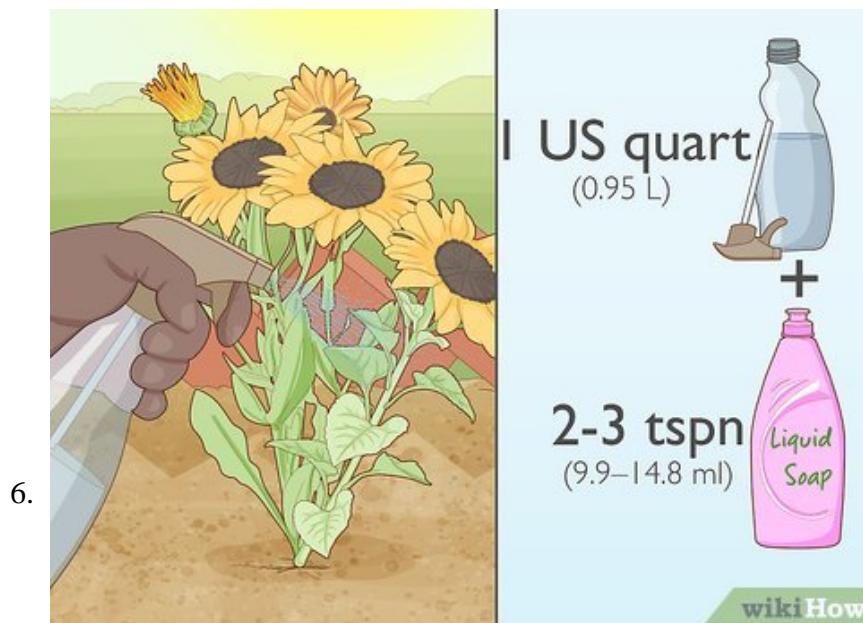
**Spread 3–4 in (7.6–10.2 cm) of mulch over the soil.** Opt for organic mulch, such as leaves, hay, or bark, and get enough to cover the entire area of your garden. Look for mulch that has smaller pieces rather than large chunks since it won't be as effective at retaining moisture. Use a rake to create a thin, even layer of mulch, leaving about 2 inches (5.1 cm) between the mulch and the vegetable stems to prevent rot. Throughout the season, <sup>[4]</sup>

1. Mulching also prevents weeds from growing in the spaces between your vegetables.



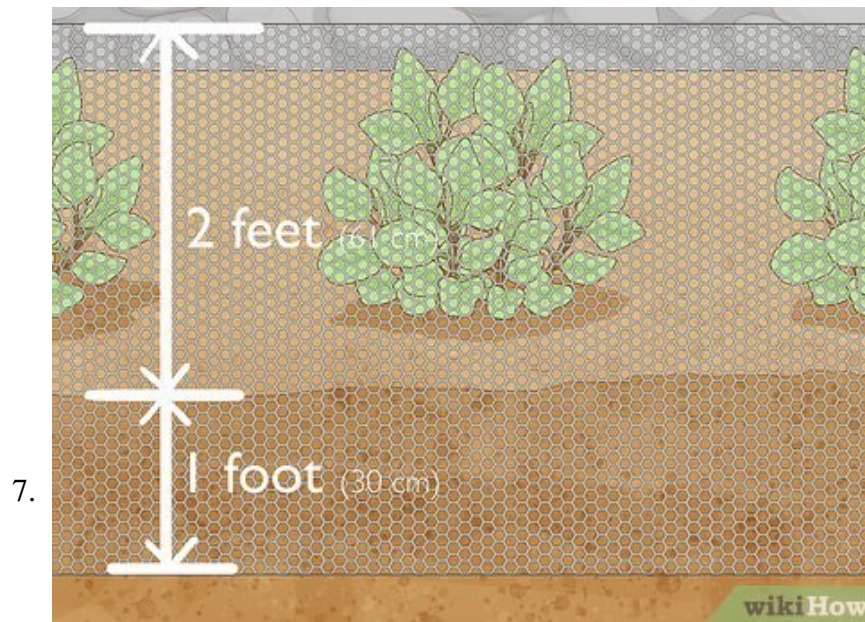
**Remove weeds or crowded seedlings when you notice them.** Check your garden every 1–2 days and look for weed sprouts coming through the soil. Grab the base of the stem and pull up as much of the root system as you're able to so they don't grow back. Then pull any vegetable seedlings that are closer than 1–2 inches (2.5–5.1 cm) to another growth since they may compete for nutrients. Pick out the weakest growths so you're more likely to have successful crops.<sup>[5]</sup>

1. If you'd rather not pull the weeds by hand, cut into the soil with a hoe just below the weed or vegetable's roots.



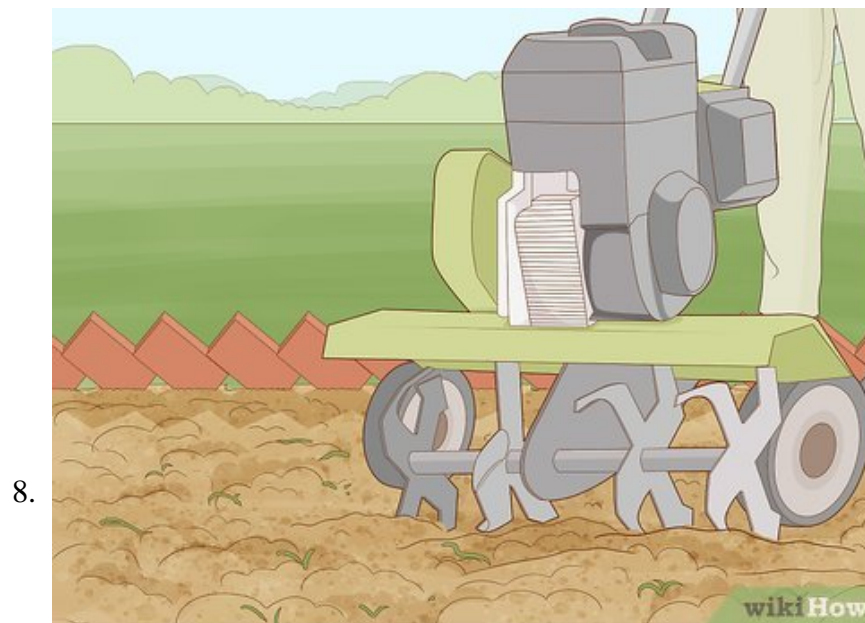
**Spray plants with soapy water to remove and prevent pests.** Fill a garden sprayer or a spray bottle with 2–3 teaspoons (9.9–14.8 ml) of liquid dish soap and 1 US quart (0.95 L) of water. Apply the homemade pesticide to the entire vegetable, including the stems and underneath the leaves. If you have trouble reaching all parts of the plants with a spray bottle, wet a clean rag with the solution and wipe the areas that you missed clean.<sup>[6]</sup>

1. Try hosing your plants down with a gentle stream to clean off pests that stick on the leaves.
2. Avoid using chemical pesticides since they will stay in the soil or on your vegetables and make them unsafe to eat.



**Put fences around your garden to keep out larger pests.** If you have rabbits getting into your vegetables, use a chicken wire fence that's buried 1 foot (30 cm) underground and extends up 2 feet (61 cm). If you're dealing with raccoons or possums, opt for wire fences that are 5–6 feet (1.5–1.8 m) tall and extend 4–5 inches (10–13 cm) underground. Put lightweight plastic netting around the base of the fence to deter animals from getting close to it.<sup>[7]</sup>

1. If you have deer entering your yard, look for a mesh fence that's 6–8 feet (1.8–2.4 m) tall and anchored to the ground.



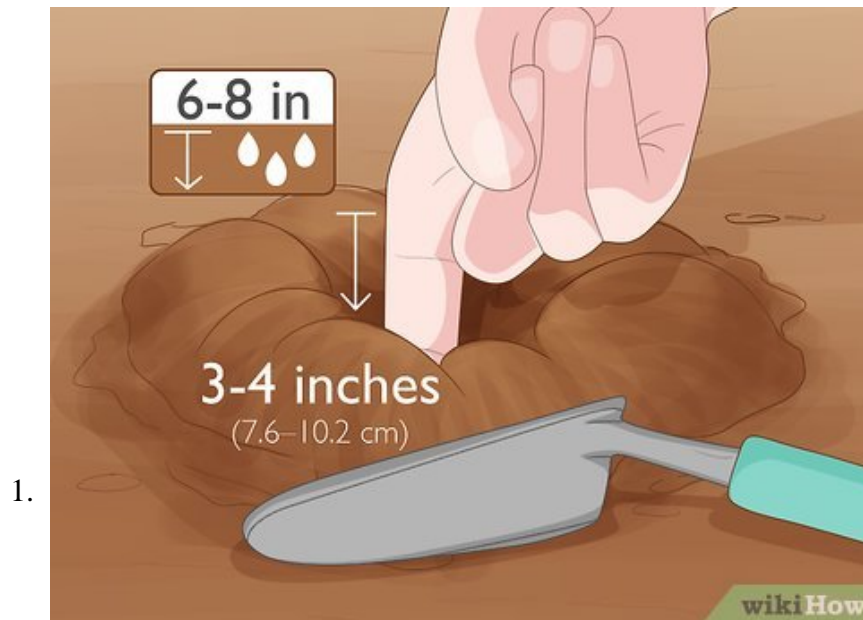
**Till the soil and old plants in the fall to add more organic matter.** After you've harvested the vegetables, drag a hoe through the soil to turn it over. Mix in the roots or stems that were left over from

your vegetables so it decomposes and adds nutrients to the soil. Smooth out the soil and spread it evenly in your garden bed so it's ready for the next growing season.<sup>[8]</sup>

1. If you want to add more nutrients, spread a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch (1.3 cm) of compost to the soil as you till it.
2. Don't leave any diseased plants in the soil since they can introduce bacteria to the next season's growth.

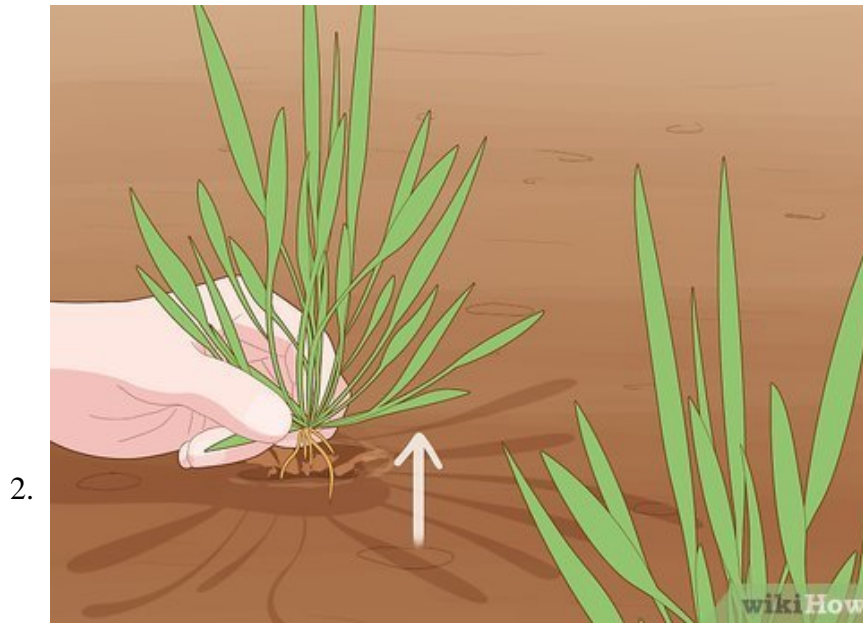
Method 2 of 3:

## Sustaining Flowers and Landscaping



**Water the soil to a depth of 6–8 inches (15–20 cm) if it feels dry.** Dig a small hole with a trowel that's 3–4 inches (7.6–10.2 cm) deep and feel the soil with your finger. If it's dry to the touch, use a watering can or garden hose with a sprinkler attachment to water the plants. Let the water soak into the soil until it's wet 6–8 inches (15–20 cm) below the surface.<sup>[9]</sup>

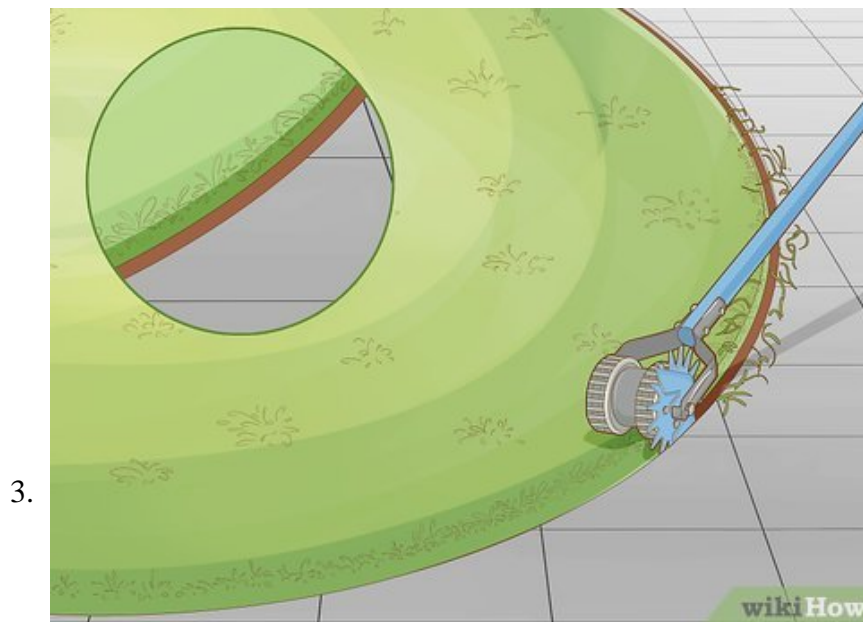
1. If you can afford it, purchase an irrigation or sprinkler system for your garden so you don't have to worry about watering it yourself.
2. If you notice plant leaves turning yellow or drooping, you may have overwatered your garden. Let the soil dry out before you water it again.



**Pull weeds out by hand or with a hoe weekly.** Look for growths in the soil between your plants at least once a week so your plants get the nutrients they need. Grab the base of the weed's stems as close to the ground as you can and pull them straight out of the ground to remove the roots. If you want to use a hoe, push it in about 1–2 inches (2.5–5.1 cm) into the soil to cut the roots before removing them from your garden.<sup>[10]</sup>

1. Don't throw weeds in a compost bin since they could still spread seeds or take root again.

**Tip:** Put a 2–4 in (5.1–10.2 cm) layer of organic mulch over the soil to prevent weeds from growing through. Mulch can also help your garden retain more moisture so you don't have to water it as frequently.



**Cut the turf around your beds to maintain the garden edge.** Stand so you're facing your garden and keep your spade vertical. Place the sharp edge of the spade against the turf around the edges of your

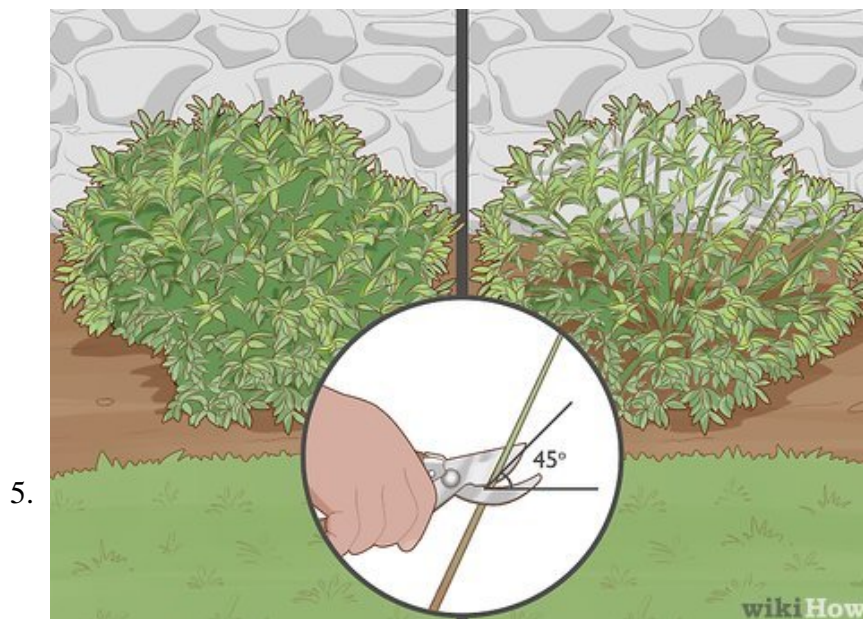
garden and push it 3–4 inches (7.6–10.2 cm) into the soil. Pull the handle toward you to remove a wedge of turf so your garden has a clean edge. Continue around the entire garden bed's perimeter with the spade. [11]

1. If you have an electric garden edger, you may use that instead.



**Top-dress the soil with compost in the spring and fall.** Start spreading the compost before the main growing season starts, or else your plants may not have the nutrients they need to bloom. [12]

1. Compost adds more nutrients to your soil and keeps your plants healthy.
2. You may buy compost from your local gardening store or you can make your own.



**Prune shrubs to help thin them out and enhance growth.** If you have shrubs that flower in the summer, choose to prune them in the late winter. If your plants bud in the early spring, then trim their branches right after they bloom so they have time to recover. Use hand pruners to trim up to a third of the plant's growth. Make your cuts at a 45-degree angle so water runs off them and reduces the risk of rot. [13]

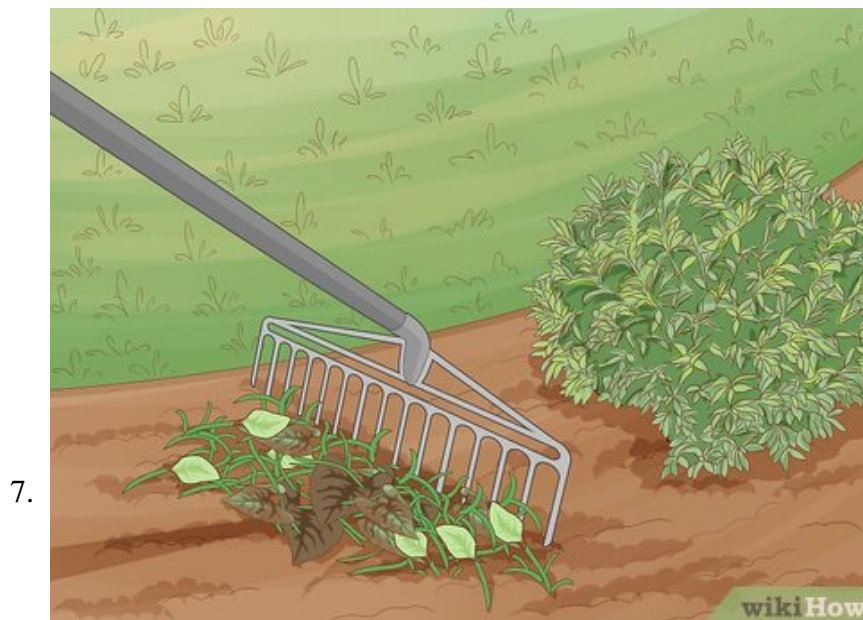


1. Be sure to reach into the middle of the plants to remove some of the interior branches to allow air flow through the plant.
2. If you notice branches or leaves shriveling or yellowing from heat during the summer, prune them so they don't kill the rest of the plant.



**Deadhead dying flowers in the summer to help promote future growth.** Wait until the blooms in your garden start shriveling up, or when they turn yellow or brown. Pinch the bases of the flowers and carefully twist them to pull them off of the plant. If you have difficulty removing the blooms by hand, cut the flowers at the base with a pair of hand pruners.<sup>[14]</sup>

1. If you leave dead flowers on your plants, they may not bloom fully during the next growing season.
2. If you have perennial plants, cut them to a height of 8–10 inches (20–25 cm) at the end of the growing season, or else they may not grow as well in the next year.<sup>[15]</sup>

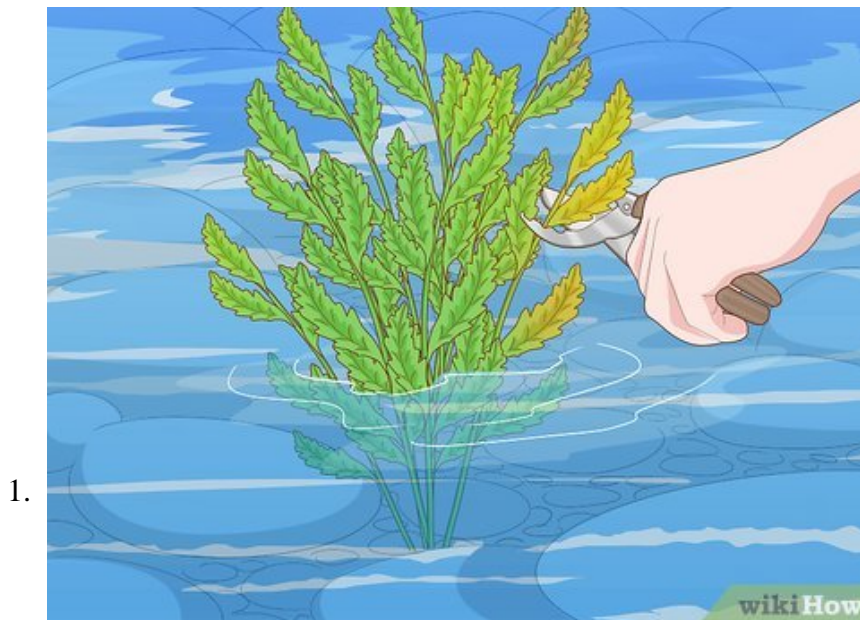


**Rake debris out from the garden beds in the fall.** Remove any dead plant matter that's fallen into the soil since it could easily contain diseases or cause weeds to sprout in the area. Drag your rake gently over the soil and collect any scraps or debris into a pile. Throw everything you rake out into a trash can so it doesn't spread anywhere else in your yard.<sup>[16]</sup>

1. Cleaning up debris in the fall ensures that bacteria don't absorb into the soil before the next growing season.
2. You don't have to remove plants that have died or withered naturally after the growing season since they can add nutrients back into your garden.<sup>[17]</sup>

Method 3 of 3:

## Caring for a Water Garden



**Cut plants back once or twice during the growing season.** Use a pair of hand pruners to cut off any growths that look yellow, brown, or diseased. If the plant looks healthy, then opt for cutting back the oldest stems or branches to encourage new growth. Aim to trim about a third of the plant's growth in the beginning and near the end of the main growing season.<sup>[18]</sup>

1. If you need to reach plants in the middle of the water garden's pond, walk through it with wading boots. Go slowly so you don't slip or fall.
2. Some plants, such as water hyacinth, may need more frequent trimming since they are more invasive.

2.



**Remove dead leaves or plants as soon as possible.** Check your water garden daily to make sure there isn't any foreign debris that fell into the pond since it could cause algae to grow. Pick out floating debris with a pond skimming net and throw it away in your trash. If you have dying plants, trim off any stems or leaves with your pruners before they fall into the water.<sup>[19]</sup>

1. If you want to prevent debris from falling in the water, stretch a piece of mesh netting over the water to catch it.

3.



**Clear and rinse the filter weekly.** Look for the pump along the edge of your water garden and remove the lid to access the filter. Take out any leaves or debris that are stuck inside the filter and throw them away so water can flow easily through it. Then pull the filter straight out and spray it with your garden hose to clean off anything that's stuck to it.<sup>[20]</sup>

1. If the debris doesn't rinse off of the filter, buy a replacement from a gardening store or online.



**Refill the water garden with your garden hose once per week.** Water will naturally evaporate from your pond, so place your garden hose in the garden. While the amount of water you need to refill the pond varies on the weather, try to add about 2–3 inches (5.1–7.6 cm) each week.<sup>[21]</sup>

1. Avoid replacing all of the water at once in your garden since you could remove beneficial bacteria or stress your plants.
2. Some water gardens automatically refill depending on the type of pump or system you have.

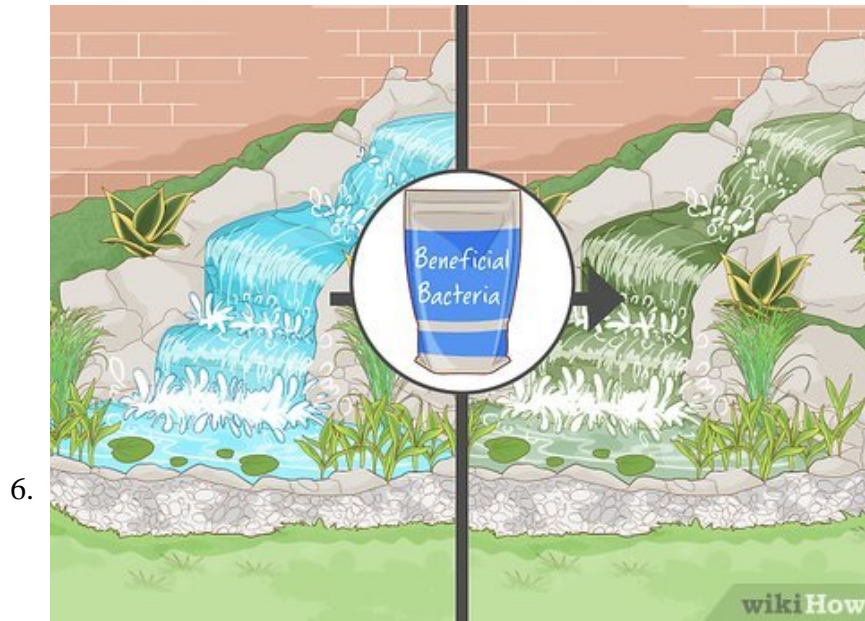
**Tip:** Mark the regular water level on the pond's liner or on a rock around the edge so you know how much you need to fill it each week.



**Place fertilizer tabs in the aquatic soil to stimulate plant growth.** Fertilize your plants at the beginning of the growing season so your plants get the nutrients they need. Reach into the water and push 1–2

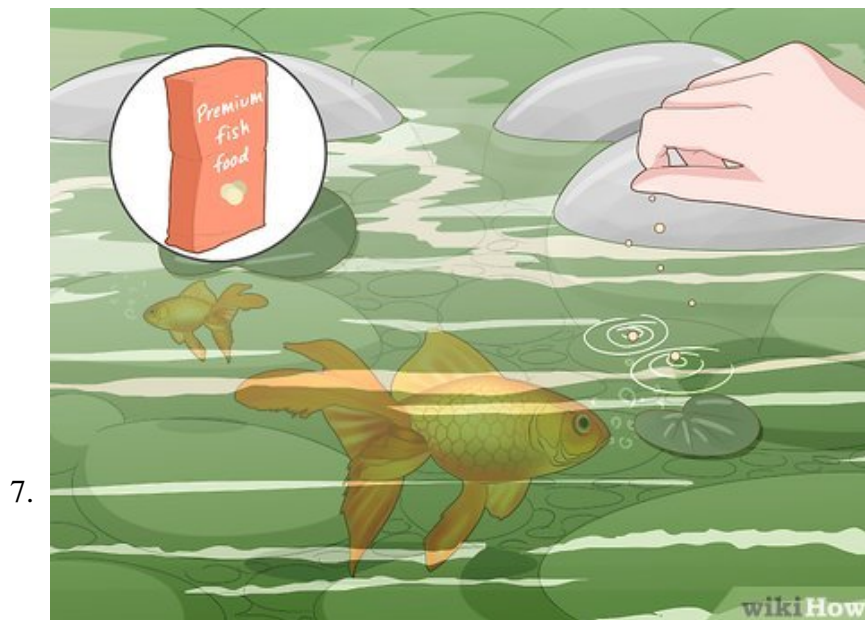
fertilizer tabs per plant into soil underwater and cover them. Over 3–4 days, the fertilizer will dissipate in the soil and water and keep your plants healthy.<sup>[22]</sup>

1. You can buy fertilizer tabs from your local gardening store or online.
2. Avoid using standard garden fertilizer since it could cause algae to grow on the surface.



**Add beneficial bacteria to help maintain the natural ecosystem.** Put the bacteria in your pond at the beginning of the growing season and follow up with more every 5–6 weeks. Follow the directions on the package and add enough beneficial bacteria based on the size of your pond. As the bacteria grow in your pond, it will eliminate algae and provide nutrients for your plants.<sup>[23]</sup>

1. You can buy beneficial bacteria for ponds online or at specialty gardening stores.
2. It can take around 4 weeks for the bacteria to grow, so your pond may look green or algae-filled at the beginning of the growing season.



**Feed fish in your water garden daily.** Get premium fish food for the species you have in your pond and toss a handful into your pond each day. Make sure you don't overfeed the fish, or else they may not eat algae throughout the day.<sup>[24]</sup>

1. Avoid feeding fish after temperatures get lower than 50 °F (10 °C) since they will go dormant and have trouble digesting solid food.

You finished reading the article "**How to Maintain a Garden**" edited by the [TipsMake](#) team. We hope this article has provided you with many useful tech tips and tricks. You can search for similar articles on tips and guides. Thank you for reading and for following us regularly.