

AVCG Organic Gardening Guidelines

The AVCG garden, in an effort to follow sustainable gardening practices and make our garden safe and healthy for all participants, would like to establish the following organic guidelines for use at our garden. We encourage our gardeners to take the "I grow organically" pledge to follow the guidelines for organic gardening below.

The National Organic Standards Board defines organic gardening as "an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity. It is based on minimal use of farm inputs and on management practices that restore, maintain and enhance ecological harmony. Organic gardening emphasizes working with nature, soil building, preventing problems before they occur and using only natural, non-toxic or minimally toxic substances if intervention is required.

Fertilizers

The best fertilizer is compost. Organic compost is truly a revitalizing and magical garden mixture. It provides nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium as well as other elements (calcium, sulfur and micronutrients). Furthermore, compost aerates soil, breaks up clay, binds together sand, improves drainage, prevents erosion, neutralizes toxins, holds precious moisture, releases essential nutrients and feeds the life of the soil. Below are recommended fertilizers (followed by N for Nitrogen, P for Phosphorous or K for potassium for the three major plant nutrients provided by each fertilizer) that may be used, followed by prohibited fertilizers.

Recommended Fertilizers (any commercial product marked "OMRI" is OK)

Compost (homemade) or from the store (N, P, K)
Animal manures (aged and composted before use) (N)
Alfalfa meal (N)
Blood meal and Hoof and horn meal (N)
Kelp or seaweed (liquid and powder) (N)
Fish emulsion (N, P)
Rock phosphate (P)
Soft phosphate (colloidal) (P)
Bone meal (P)
Granite or feldspar dust (K)
Greensand (K)
Potassium magnesium sulfate (sold as KMag or SulPoMag)

Prohibited Fertilizers

Synthetic fertilizers of any kind (e.g. Miracle Gro)
Any formulations containing sewage sludge (e.g. Milorganite)
DAP and MAP (ammonium phosphates)
Chilean Nitrate
Superphosphate (acidulated phosphates)
Chilean Nitrate of Potash (15-0-14)
Muriate of Potash, KCl, (0-0-60)

Pesticides

Organic methods promote a healthy ecosystem where birds, insects, plants and humans all reach a natural balance that is beneficial for all. The first line of pest control for the organic grower should be a careful evaluation and maximization of the soil and nutrients for a plant. Good compost and loose, rich soil are often the best defense against pests. Make sure your plants receive enough water and sunlight, choose plants that grow well in southern California, utilize companion plantings and rotate crops. These can all prevent insect problems.

Below are recommended and not recommended (but permitted with caution) pest controls that may be used when problems persist after using recommended methods. Prohibited products are listed as well.

Recommended Pesticides

Beneficial insects (ladybugs, praying mantises, trichogramma wasps, lacewings, tachinid and syrphid flies, etc.)

Hand-picking pests off the plant

Traps (pheromone, sticky, water, food, etc.)

Row covers

Spraying with garlic, onion or vegetable oil and pepper sprays

Insecticidal soaps (preferably biodegradable soap solutions)

BT (bacillus thuringiensis)

Chitin

Diatomaceous earth

Bicarbonates (sodium bicarbonate--baking soda and potassium bicarbonate)

Sulfur

Isopropyl alcohol

Hydrogen Peroxide

Spinosad

Pesticides Not Recommended

Pyrethrum

Quassia

Ryania

Sabadilla

Prohibited Pesticides

Synthetic pesticides, insecticides or fungicides of any kind (Bug B Gon, Captan, Diazinon, Insectagon, Kelthane, Lindane, Malathion, Permethrin, Sevin, Thuricide, etc.)

Nicotine in any form

Formulations containing copper (e.g. Bordeaux Mix)

Rotenone

Pyrethroids (synthetic pyrethrum)

Prohibited Herbicides

Synthetic herbicides of any kind (Preen, Roundup, Weed-B-Gon, etc.)