



Franchesca Watson looks at ways to strengthen your garden's green credentials by minimising its impact on the environment

Earth-saving Garden Design

WE'RE ALL THINKING and talking (or, perhaps, at least aware that we should be) about our own carbon footprint. One would imagine that gardening should diminish one's mark on nature but here are some things to ponder.

LOW-MILEAGE FOLIAGE

Plants purify the air by converting carbon dioxide into oxygen. They also provide food and shelter to wildlife of all kinds. But bought plants can carry many transport miles if they are not cultivated close to home, so question your local nursery or supplier about where the plants you want to buy are from. Locally-grown plants are also better adapted to the environment, for example, bougainvilleas propagated in Durban take a while to adapt to conditions in Cape Town. The same principle should apply to all items used in the garden, from tools to fertilisers.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Shifting earth and building walls and other elements consume a lot of energy.

Garden designers and their clients should be very careful during the planning process to produce a garden that will bring pleasure for many years to come. Totally recreating a garden every couple of years is exceptionally unsustainable, wasteful and destructive to nature. An excellent scheme that is in keeping with the architecture of the house and thus less likely to be changed by a new owner, does untold good for the planet.

Annual plants, like petunias, that have to be replanted every season use a lot of input and maintenance energy, unlike more permanent perennials and shrubs. So, think deeply when choosing your plants and question your desire for colour at all costs

BACK TO BASICS Try to minimise the use of chemicals in the garden. This means going back to the old ways, such as using wormwood tea for cutworms, or more modern ideas, like using plants to filter and clean the water in your swimming pool, which is an exciting prospect and not as slimy as you think.

WATER WISE South Africa is a country with limited water resources. If you are concerned about your garden's water use take the virtual water footprint test. ■ *To take the test online visit* www.waterfootprint.org

WAR ON WASTE

Fifty-per-cent of domestic refuse is organic, such as food and paper. Imagine if we all recycled this and it didn't end up in a landfill! These companies will collect waste from your home or office for recycling: ■ Abundance Recycling ☎ 021 674 2497 ■ Clearer Conscience ☎ www.clearer.co.za ■ Mondi ☎ www.paperpickup.co.za ■ Mr Recycle ☎ www.mrrecycle.co.za ■ Resolution Recycling ☎ www.resolutionrecycling.co.za ■ Whole Earth ☎ www.wholeearth.co.za ■

