

Gardening on Floyd Hill

Some of us are born to garden. It feeds our soul and soothes our worries. We enjoy fresh air and exercise as we move rocks and dirt to make way for beautiful blooms and interesting foliage. Although it is challenging, it **is** possible to have a thriving garden on Floyd Hill while honoring our "inside use only" well permits with these 4 easy rules.

1. **Amend your soil.** Add topsoil, compost, and manure to the soil in the target area as a foundation to a successful garden. This will nourish your plants and retain moisture. If you have little or no existing soil, create an area with rocks, railroad ties, etc. and fill in with soil and amendments. The latter is often preferable because of our rocky soil.
2. **Choose the right plants.** Drought resistant, zone 3 or 4 plants are a must. There are native perennials in many colors that are extremely hardy and colorful. Columbine, gaillardia, flax, yarrow, perennial geranium and sedum are in this category. When established, these plants require very little water.
3. **Use rocks and mulch around plants.** Look around your property and observe native plants. It is likely that any thriving plant is growing beside a rock and has pine needles or aspen leaves at its base. Create that environment in your garden. As you add plants, surround them with a few rocks. Then add some mulch. Shredded bark or pine needles will work. This cools the soil and retains moisture to decrease the watering needs of your plants. A few inches of mulch in outdoor potted plants will significantly decrease their need for water.
4. **Water with "gray water".** Put a small bucket in you kitchen sink. You will be amazed at how quickly it fills with water from washing hands, rinsing veggies, rinsing hummingbird feeders, etc. When the bucket is full, head to the garden and empty. Water from bathing can also be used. Gray water should not be used for a vegetable garden unless it is very clean and pure.

A simple rain barrel can be made with a plastic garbage bin. Mine are secured to the house with trailer tie downs and disguised with wood lattice. The August rains netted about 80 gallons.

Your gardening success will attract elk, deer and other hungry animals. Products like "Deer-off" and "Bobbex" will keep them away. Please contact me if you have questions or would like to share your gardening tips.

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