



# The Green Door

July 2004

The Green Door is a monthly newsletter of sustainable building and real estate geared to present and future homeowners.

We Are Going Green—GreenWorks That Is!! We have decided to leave John L Scott Real Estate and become part of the GreenWorks Realty team. We have had nothing but positive experiences with JLS, especially our branch in Laurelhurst and the wonderful people there, but GreenWorks offers us an opportunity to be passionate about our work and gives us a company to grow in. GreenWorks Realty specializes in green homes, community and co-housing while also maintaining a strong focus on traditional residential and commercial real estate. Check out [Greenworksrealty.com](http://Greenworksrealty.com) -Cally & Danielle

*We are taking a brief interlude from “Greening Your Homes” to talk about gardening, which we are all doing this time of year. Enjoy!!*

## Naturescaping

As we all move toward living with a healthier awareness of our environment, sustainable gardening is a skill many of us will cultivate. Whether we grow sprouts on our windowsills, flowers in window boxes, or vegetables in our backyards; whether we have an urban backyard, a plot in a community p-patch or acres of countryside to farm, we can use methods based on the understanding of how nature creates healthy plants and ecosystems.

Various schools of sustainable gardening have developed with specialized views, each contributing to this diverse practice. The one we are probably most familiar with is **Organic Gardening**, which focuses on creating a healthy garden by “feeding the soil, not the plant”. Gardeners view the garden as a mini eco-system to be maintained through returning plant wastes to the soil via composting and using physical and biological methods to control pests.

**Biodynamic Gardening**, originally developed by scientist-philosopher Rudolph Steiner, considers the soil to be the foundation of health for plants, animals, and humans and seeks to actively work with the health-giving forces of nature. Special compost preparations and sprays are used to enhance the biological life of the soil. It is the oldest non-chemical agricultural movement. **Biointensive Gardening**, developed in the United States by Alan Chadwick, uses raised, cultivated beds to grow a large amount of food in a small area. The yields are two to ten times more than what conventional mechanized agriculture can grow. To grow food this way takes one-third to one-thirtieth the water and one-hundredth the human and mechanical energy needed for more common methods. **Permaculture**,

“permanent agriculture” or “permanent culture”, is a way of designing and maintaining farms, gardens or whole communities that have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. Permaculture’s basic philosophy is based on the question “what does this person, or land have to give if I cooperate with it?” instead of “What can I get from this land, or person?”. **English Cottage Gardens** were developed in pre-supermarket England, out of the necessity of cottagers to produce fruit, flowers, vegetables, and herbs in a compact space. These highly efficient gardens are models of land use that is both practical and charming. Within the confines of simple but strict garden paths, plants intermingle abundantly, the result of much care and soil cultivation. **Native Plantscapes** are gardens dedicated to the native plants that naturally thrive in any given region. Native plants have evolved and adapted to local conditions over thousands of years, they are vigorous and hardy and are a beneficial part of the larger ecosystem. Once re-established they require no irrigation or fertilization and thus help reduce demands on resources. Bringing back native plants also helps to restore regional character.

Unfortunately, we seem to have evolved into another form of gardening altogether, ornamental gardening. We have developed large lawns and beautiful gardens that take resources like water, fertilizers, pesticides and much human effort, without any usable yield. Water is becoming more and more precious, fertilizers are unnecessary with the use of composts and appropriate plants, some pesticides are down right toxic to us, the soil and our water and people are realizing the attractiveness of low-maintenance gardens. We can each learn from our individual gardens and apply techniques that make sense to us. For an excellent example of a sustainable garden that is also beautiful visit Bradner Gardens Park, in Southeast Seattle. It is a horticultural demonstration park that has everything from Master Gardener Ornamental Borders, that are water thrifty and “slow maintenance”, to Urban Food Gardens and Native Plant Habitats, and they are all organic. If you do not have a garden but would like one, The Department of Neighborhoods’ P-Patch Program, in conjunction with the not-for-profit friends of P-Patch, provides community garden space for residents in 44 neighborhoods.

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## "A Lawn is Nature Under a Totalitarian Regime"

### Sustainable Gardening by Susan Gregory

Sustainability as a way of life is something that we really only need to go back a generation or two to connect with. I remember hanging clothes on the line with my grandmother to air dry and seeing her routinely throw the coffee grounds out the back door to feed the huge fig tree that grew there. The fig in turn, provided food for canning into the jars that she used for years and years. She wouldn't have known the meaning of the term sustainable or recycle, most likely, but she practiced both things on a daily basis, as a matter of common sense.

This brings me to the topic of the first in a series of articles on sustainable landscape practices. The basis for our landscape is the soil upon which it is built. Feeding the soil, as my grandmother did, is the surest way to enter into a cycle of life that is fundamental to our existence. Composting our yard wastes, food scraps, and leaving in place the fallen leaves, are all sustainable practices that are simple to accomplish. The soil that is well fed and respected as a living organism, absorbs moisture, holds it more effectively and provides us with healthy plants that feed us in body and soul.

Composting has long been encouraged in Seattle and well supported by our local utilities. The large paper yard waste bags, filled with our grass clippings, leaves and weeds are taken away to be composted elsewhere. Worm bins are another way to recycle what we might normally send directly into the waste stream. Worms will eat your food garbage and return it to you well processed and ready to add an amazing nutrient back to your soil. Check out websites listed below to find out more on building your soil, composting and worm bins.

Adding organic matter to the soil is appropriate whether your soil is thin sand or heavy clay. Perhaps the easiest way to do this is to let Mother Nature deliver a load of fallen leaves each autumn and mulch your planting beds with them. Even better is to compost those leaves for a season before applying them. Coarse leaves such as oak or big-leaf maple should really spend a year or so decomposing, and then they'll have a rich leaf mold that'll be a pleasure to apply to your garden beds. Find an out of the way area in your yard to pile those leaves, or make a bin of wire mesh and fill it with leaves in the fall. Add some water to start the process and forget about it for a year. When you remember it again, you'll be amazed at the rich substance that has been created. Practicing these soil building techniques is really a way to add oneself into a natural cycle of life, death and rebirth, and to, in a small way, leave the earth itself a better place for generations to come. For more information see July websites.

**Susan Gregory is a Landscape Designer with Gregory and Co. Landscapes**

#### Seattle Sustainable Residence Diary-Entry #3

So we've hit a road block. We pulled a preliminary title report on the land we put an offer in on and it turns out it was a recent foreclosure. These issues take about three years to be cleared and make buying and especially building on the land a risk. So we are back to square one- looking for an affordable in-city lot again. **JRF**

#### Testimonial

Like a friend of ours described, making an offer and buying a house is like slipping on a banana peel-it's suddenly there, fast, taking you for a scary, thrilling ride you can't resist (if you really want the house). Cally and Danielle were right there with us the whole time-listening to our needs and fears, providing professional advice and advocacy in a timely manner, and holding our hands until the ride stopped. Within a month of our offer we landed, with grace, safely and happily in our new home. Thanks Cally and Danielle!!

**The Greenwood House -Kate, Theo, Trish and Ruby**

#### July Websites

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/pinpresrcs.htm>

Native plant resources

<ftp://dnr.metrokc.gov/dnr/library/2003/gonative.pdf>

Going Native brochure

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/resrecy/composting/foodrecycling.asp>

Information on King County's new Food Waste Composting Program.

<http://www.cityfarmer.org/wormcomp61.html>

Worm bin composting.

<http://www.seattletilth.org>  
Organic Gardening clinics & more.

<http://www.seattle.gov/util/Services/Yard/Composting>

For more on composting.

The Green Door is brought to you by Cally Fulton and Danielle Johnson, both Real Estate Associates with Greenworks Realty, Seattle and is written, in part, by JR Fulton, Architect and LEED Accredited Professional. Feel free to forward this newsletter to others interested in making their homes & community more sustainable. If you or someone you know would appreciate our real estate services please call-

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