

CHOOSING A LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONAL FOR YOUR BAY-FRIENDLY GARDEN



Why should you care about the practices of your landscape company?



“Bay-Friendly” offers a holistic approach to landscaping that works with nature to reduce waste, prevent pollution and support the integrity of the San Francisco Bay watershed, one of California’s most magnificent ecosystems.

Our gardens can be a haven for migratory birds, wildlife and our families or they can be a significant source of pollution and waste.

How a landscape professional manages your yard and garden – from using pesticides to choosing plants – has an impact on your garden, our natural resources and the San Francisco Bay watershed. Urban runoff carries pesticides, sediment, fertilizer into storm drains which lead to our creeks, waterways and eventually the Bay.

Landscape professionals who use Bay-Friendly practices can eliminate or minimize these hazards. Building healthy soil by using compost and mulch is one such practice. Adding compost and mulch to the soil helps conserve water, reduces weeds and the need for pesticides - while also turning the soil into a living filter which removes pollutants from water. Using compost and mulch becomes the link between protecting our watersheds, conserving landfill space and cultivating living soil – the foundation of a healthy, thriving garden.

Nurturing healthy soil is just the beginning. Bay-Friendly landscapes mimic natural systems which recycle everything – water, debris, and nutrients –

endlessly. It pays attention to climate and local conditions and uses plants that are adapted to those conditions. It follows maintenance practices that support the goals of conserving resources and reducing waste.

This approach to gardening:

- Landscapes locally
- Landscapes for less to the landfill
- Nurtures the soil
- Conserves water
- Conserves energy
- Protects water & quality
- Creates wildlife habitat



All Bay-Friendly gardens are not alike -a Bay-Friendly landscape can be your Mediterranean retreat, a shaded woodland or a wildlife habitat. It can include edible gardens, fruiting trees, beds of cutting flowers or play areas for your children. It does not limit you and your landscaper but offers a wide array of choices for creating and caring for your yard and garden. Selecting a Bay-Friendly landscape professional ensures you will have a beautiful garden that also protects our Bay Area communities and environment.

Asking the right questions can help you find the right landscape professional to create or maintain your Bay-Friendly garden. The following questions identify practices integral to Bay-Friendly Landscaping.

Landscaping Locally

Does the company...



- Test the soil?
Knowing the soil's fertility, texture, and structure helps determine soil quality, types of plants it can best support and any need for supplements.
- Use local, natural plant communities as models?
A plant community is a relatively distinct pattern of vegetation found in different regions of the county. Using local plant communities as a model is a way to work with nature to create spectacular landscapes.
- Practice fireescaping in high-risk fire areas?
Understanding the topography, fuel and local weather are critical to designing and maintaining a landscape that reduces the potential for loss to fire. Plant selection is also very important to reducing the fuel load and avoiding fire ladders.

Landscaping for Less to the Landfill

Does the company...



- Select appropriate plants?
Choosing the right plants for the right space is an important way to reduce the 110,000 tons of plant debris landfilled in Alameda County annually. Selecting plants that can grow to their mature size in the space allotted, replacing sheared hedges with natural shapes, and avoiding invasive species are sound practices.
- Grasscycle?
Grasscycling means leaving the clippings on the lawn after mowing, so they decompose and release their nutrients into the soil.
- Compost plant debris? Or keep plant debris separated from trash for composting at a regional compost facility?
Composting is the controlled decomposition of organic matter. It turns plant debris into a beneficial soil amendment.
- Prune selectively and properly?
Pruning should complement the natural form and strengthen the structural integrity of the plant. It should not be used to severely restrict plant growth — improper pruning weakens the plant and generates unnecessary waste.

ASK



Broken concrete is used to create a retaining wall.

CHOOSE

*Using compost
conserves
water and
adds nutrients
to your soil.*



Nurturing the Soil

Does the company...



- Protect soil from erosion and compaction during construction?
Conserving topsoil protects soil structure and the soil's ability to support the microbes that cycle nutrients and filter pollutants. Local waterways and aquatic habitat are also protected.
- Amend the soil with compost before planting?
Compost fosters a diverse, fertile, and disease suppressive soil. It can improve structure, aeration and water holding capacity of the soil.
- Mulch regularly?
Mulch conserves water, improves soil life, enhances the growth of plants and the appearance of the landscape.
- Feed soils naturally?
Using natural amendments, adding compost to the soil, or drenching the soil with compost tea, nurtures a strong soil foodweb. This makes nutrients available to the plants and protects water quality.

Conserving Water

Does the company...



- Recommend California natives or Mediterranean plants?

Appropriately sited native or Mediterranean plants are well adapted to California's summer-dry climate. Many species tolerate dry summers without watering once they are established.

- Install and regularly maintain efficient irrigation systems?

High efficiency systems limit evaporation and runoff. Well-maintained systems that do not leak, over-spray or gush water are critical to conserving water.

- Water according to need?

Water needs vary by season and site. Appropriate watering rates moderate plant growth, which promotes plant health.



*Native and
Mediterranean
plants offer diverse
and dynamic
choices*

Conserving Energy



Does the company...

- Specify local products and suppliers?
Buying local reduces the hidden environmental costs, such as pollution and energy consumption, of transporting materials.
- Protect trees that help moderate building temperatures?
Trees help conserve energy by shading, cooling the air through evapotranspiration, and providing wind breaks.
- Use hand-powered equipment while minimizing the use of gas-powered equipment?
Reducing fossil fuel consumption protects the health of the operator and local air and water quality.

Protecting Water & Air Quality



Does the company...

- Use an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach?
IPM is a holistic approach to insects, plant diseases, weeds, and other pests. First and foremost, IPM seeks to prevent pests by fostering a healthy, diverse landscape in which plants have the strength to resist disease and insect pests, and to out-compete weeds.
- Try alternative approaches before turning to pesticides?
Least toxic pesticides should be used as a last resort when preventative and non-chemical methods are not keeping pests below acceptable levels.

Creating Wildlife Habitat



Does the company...

- Consider habitat needs for birds and pollinators?
With thoughtful plant selection and design, home landscapes can provide food, water, shelter and nesting sites for birds, butterflies, beneficial insects and other creatures.
- Foster biodiversity?
A diverse landscape includes annuals, biennials and perennials of many different sizes, shapes, colors and textures. It includes evergreens and deciduous plants, species that bloom at different times of the year and those that bear fruit or berries. Diversity provides habitat for wildlife and beneficial organisms that help control plant pests.



PROTECT

Checking Credentials

Don't be afraid to ask about past projects and professional experience. A few questions to help glean more information:

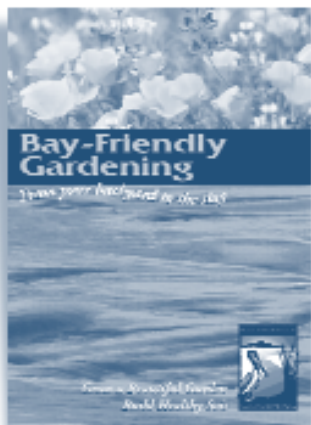
1. Ask for references, especially for comparably scaled designs or sites.
2. How many years experience do they have?
3. How long has their staff been working for them?
4. Have any of the gardens they designed or manage been included in the annual Bay-Friendly Garden Tour.
5. Are they affiliated with any professional associations. Some local professional organizations or chapters include:
 - American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)
 - California Landscape Contractors Association (CLCA)
 - Ecological Landscape Association (ELA)

Resources

The Bay-Friendly Gardening Program offers tools to help the home gardener create and cultivate a Bay-Friendly garden. Likewise, the Bay-Friendly Landscaping Program provides extensive guidelines for the professional landscaper to design, construct and maintain Bay-Friendly landscapes for their clients.

Tools for the home gardener include:

Bay-Friendly Gardening Workshop Series. *Attend a hands-on workshop and cultivate your knowledge.*



Guide free to Alameda County residents.

Bay-Friendly Gardening: From your Backyard to the Bay. *Order a copy of this 70+ page guide for local gardening tips and how-to.*

Master Composter Training. *Participate in this in-depth annual program and educate your community.*

Bay-Friendly Garden Tour. *Visit local residential gardens for ideas and inspiration.*

Dig Deeper Into Ecological Design and Maintenance

Your current or prospective landscape professional can learn more about these practices by requesting a copy of the “Bay-Friendly Landscape Guidelines: Sustainable Practices for the Landscape Professional”. A residential guide, “Bay-Friendly Gardening: From your Backyard to the Bay”, is available free for Alameda County home gardeners. Order or download copies online at www.bayfriendly.org or by calling 510-444-SOIL.

Bay-Friendly Garden Registration. *Share your success and inform your neighbors with a garden sign.*

Discount Compost Bins. *Buy a bin and make homemade compost.*

Compost Information Rotline. 510-444-SOIL
Call for composting tips.

Home gardeners and professional landscapers can visit www.bayfriendly.org for more information.

Bay-Friendly Gardening and Landscaping are programs of StopWaste.Org.

STOPWASTE.ORG
Reducing the Waste Stream for Alameda County

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