

April is a Great Month for the Earth (2025-04-12)
By Kate O'Lenic, Master Gardener

April showers bring May flowers. This is only one of the many reasons to love April. Trees have leaves, birds are singing, flowers are popping up everywhere. Maybe that's why April 22, 2025 is Earth Day and April is National Native Plant Month.

The theme for Earth Day this year is all about energy. And surprise! Gardeners can help save energy by landscaping for energy efficiency. The Department of Energy has published articles about this for at least 30 years. For our area, here are some suggestions:

- Take advantage of the sun in winter to warm the house.
 - Planting deciduous trees helps warm the house in winter and cool it in the summer.
 - Avoid placing evergreens such that they block the sun during the winter.
- Use shade during the summer to keep the house cool.
 - Deciduous trees planted on the south side of your house will provide shade in summer.
 - Use groundcover plants, trees and shrubs to cool the soil, sidewalks and other paved areas around the house.
 - A row of taller shrubs can help cool the driveway.
 - Vines on a trellis can shade and cool the patio.
- Use windbreaks of trees and shrubs on the north and northwest side of the house to block winter winds away from buildings.
- Use summer breezes to help cool the home with a properly placed windbreak for direct wind toward the house.

The resources below provide all the details you'll need to accomplish energy efficiency with your gardens.

Resources

“Energy-Efficient Landscaping,” <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/energy-efficient-landscaping>

“Landscaping for Shade,” <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/landscaping-shade>

“ENERGY SERIES: What about Landscaping and Energy Efficiency?,”
https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/BSE/BSE-145/BSE-334.pdf

“Natural Ventilation,” <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/natural-ventilation>