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# Save Money and Water With These 6 Clever Landscaping Hacks

by [Kentin Waits](#) on 29 July 2013

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Warm months always bring out a bit of the gardener in every homeowner. The grays and browns of winter transform into the vibrant greens of summer and coax even the most die-hard homebody outside. If you've noticed that your little slice of heaven could use some TLC but don't want to spend a mint, here are a few budget-friendly landscaping ideas. (See also: [10 Gardening Lessons Learned the Hard Way](#))

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## 1. Plant for Your Region

Plants do best in their native climates. To protect your landscaping investment, consider your region or climate zone as you choose your trees, shrubbery, flowers, and other vegetation. A handy [zone map](#) can help you stay on track with your selections and ensure that everything you plant matures and thrives year after year.

## 2. Go for Low H2O

Everyone [loves the look of a lush lawn](#), but few of us enjoy the accompanying water bill. To keep your landscaping project on budget, don't forget about the long-term maintenance costs. Landscape for your region and climate, and select plant varieties that do well without a lot of extra water. It's not only good for your wallet; it's good for the planet.



**Kentin Waits**

SENIOR WRITER



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“ *Less is more - it's much, much more.* ”

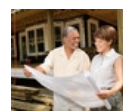
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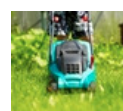
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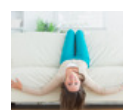
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### 3. Buy in Bulk

Superstores make buying all sorts of landscaping supplies extremely simple and convenient, but that convenience comes at a premium price. Individual bags of mulch, pea gravel, and sod can add up quickly. Large landscaping supply companies can often drop off supplies by the truckload at much lower overall price. Don't need a whole truckload? Split it with your neighbors. Another option for less expensive materials may be as close as city hall — some municipalities offer free mulch as long as you're willing to haul it away.

### 4. Reuse and Repurpose

The salvage business is booming, but there are still treasures out there just waiting to be found and repurposed. Check out estate sales, auctions, thrift stores, and even the curbside on trash day. Shallow planters can be given new life as birdbaths, old fences and columns can become decorative accents and trellises, farm tables can be transformed into potting stands, and old stumps or blocks of stone can become garden benches.

Get inspired by thumbing through outdoor design or gardening magazines, and challenge yourself to recreate your favorite ideas on a budget. [This piece](#) from Sunset magazine inspired me.

The reuse idea can carry over into your plantings too. Is a neighbor's backyard being overtaken by bamboo? Offer to help cut them back in exchange for a few starts that you can add to your own yard. Ask friends and family to keep you in mind if they're removing old bushes, small trees, or replacing perennials. Weave these donated items into your larger design plan to save big bucks on buying new.

### 5. Turn Your Yard Into an Edible Garden

Over the past several years, there's been a quietly growing movement that aims to completely change the way we think about our lawns.

The lawn-to-garden movement advocates that homeowners transition their yards from passive highly-manicured displays into [dynamic food-producing spaces](#). The movement is driven in part by a local food sensibility that encourages folks to know where their food is grown and spurn produce that has to be imported. It's also motivated by simple frugality and self-reliance — by the idea that we can each take a more active role in our food production and lessen our dependence on big agri-business.


For landscapers on a budget, what better way to be paid back for our labors than to use our lawns to source food? From tomatoes to herbs and from cucumbers to radishes, your lawn has the potential to save you money and put food on the table. Explore how to turn part of your lawn into a fresh, local, and organic produce stand. If your city or community has strict zoning laws or covenants that prohibit such activity, chat with your neighbors and see what changes can be made through the power of organized action. For a comprehensive guide on the lawn-to-garden movement, check out Fritz Haeg's seminal book on the topic, [Edible Estates: Attack on the Front Lawn](#).

### 6. Get That Green Thumb Dirty

Sure, you may not have a backhoe sitting around in the garage, but there are landscaping projects that you can do yourself. Digging, hauling, planting, pruning, and even [some light construction work](#) can help you save big on landscaping




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contractor costs. Consider hosting a landscaping party and enlisting a few (brawny) friends to help out on a Saturday afternoon. Cold beer and warm pizza go a long way toward motivating and repaying your helpful crew.

Regardless of the scope of your project, landscaping doesn't have to break the bank. With some careful planning, creativity, and help from friends and family, your yard can go from drab to fab in just a few weeks. And now is the perfect time to put those green thumbs to the test — just don't forget the sunscreen!

*What are your favorite budget landscaping ideas?*

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