

Climate protection begins in the garden

Our gardens are changing - hot summers, mild winters, heavy rains and long dry periods: All this presents gardeners with new challenges. It is time to make your own garden climate-proof!

Christina Bösiger

Reto Knutti is considered one of the world's leading climate researchers. As a professor of climate physics at ETH Zurich, he is one of the main authors of the last major report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Recently, he said in an interview that without immediate action, a global average temperature increase of five degrees - in Switzerland probably even six or seven degrees - should be expected. Climate change presents us all with new challenges, which of course do not stop at us gardeners. When gardening, the following applies: "The right plant in the right place" and "gardening in the cycle of nature". Those who remain true to this principle should actually be able to continue to achieve a good harvest or enjoy their lush blooms in the future. However, we will have to take into account a few gardening facts that climate change brings with it. These include longer dry periods and heavy rainfall events as well as a longer growing season and milder winters.



Climate change and climate protection

"Everyone who actively gardens, whether in their own garden or on the balcony, is a climate protector," says book author Verena Schubert (see book tip). Trees, shrubs and perennials process carbon dioxide (CO₂) and produce oxygen. On the one hand, every plant helps to break down carbon dioxide. And on the other hand, home-grown fruit and vegetables also reduce transport and thus carbon dioxide emissions. Climate protection and recreational fun in one's own garden thus form - in the truest sense of the word - a fruitful combination.

Climate-friendly gardening

The path to a climate-friendly garden begins with the soil, whose fertility depends on the nutrient cycle. A plant returns the nutrients it extracts from the soil for its growth when it dies. Harvesting interrupts this cycle - with the harvest, nutrients are withdrawn from the soil, which - as fertiliser - have to be returned if a permanent harvest is to be made. But which fertiliser is the right one? "Synthetic chemical fertilisers and pesticides cause CO₂ emissions in production and can also become environmental toxins," says Verena Schubert. She therefore consistently relies on natural fertilisers and plant fortification: "A good supply helps plants, animals and people to be robust and have good defences." Preventive plant fortification with extracts of field horsetail and comfrey and stinging nettle are, for example, the best plant protection! They increase the resistance of fruit, vegetable and



ornamental plants, drive away pests with their smell and help the seeds to grow well. A few, such as tansy and garlic, can also fight fungal diseases. According to Verena Schubert, regular use ensures strong, robust and vital flora that can better withstand frost, heat and drought. In addition, these broths enrich the soil life, which makes nutrients available to the plants, and they also contain nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and minerals themselves. "The best and cheapest fertiliser is your own compost!" the expert knows: "All garden waste is recycled in the compost and turned into valuable humus." By the way: compost is the ideal substitute for peat, which is unfortunately still used in large quantities. But peat cutting in the peatlands, which store large amounts of carbon dioxide, not only releases the carbon that has been stored since time immemorial in the form of CO₂, thereby accelerating climate change, but also causes the creatures that live there to lose their habitat forever. Compost instead of peat is therefore the climate-friendly motto!

Diversity instead of monoculture

Many different plant species, mixed in a colourful way, ensure that the soil is not depleted one-sidedly and basically needs less nutrient supply. Certain plants are good neighbours and can strengthen and protect each other. "This plays a role especially in the vegetable garden," says Verena Schubert. "Onions and leeks planted next to carrots, for example, keep the carrot fly away. Savory protects against aphids, and nasturtiums in turn attract



cabbage whitefly caterpillars, aphids and other pests. Cabbage plants and celery also help each other in this way. Celery rust and the caterpillars of the cabbage white butterfly will then be a thing of the past. Lettuce, on the other hand, keeps the infestation of ground fleas on radishes at bay.

"With effective and simple measures, we can make our green oasis fit and at the same time positively influence the climate," Verena Schubert is convinced. Try it out?!

The pillars of the climate protection garden - tips from Verena Schubert

- If you garden with climate protection in mind, you do so with nature and not against it.
- Garden without the use of pesticides, synthetic chemical fertilisers and peat.
- Go for preventive plant strengthening, the right plant in the right location, plant diversity and compost management.
- Less is more: allowing and waiting are gardening virtues that make a natural garden possible in the first place.

Gardening in Transition

In her new book "Gärtnern im Wandel" (Gardening in Transition), Verena Schubert reveals how to make a garden climate-proof. On the one hand, she shows promising methods, how to irrigate efficiently and which strategies help to keep the soil healthy. She also introduces plants that thrive in the changing climate. Servus Publishing House, ISBN No. 978-3-7104-0311-8