Right Plant, Right Place. Choose plants well adapted to our climate, and suitable for the site you are planting them.

Choose plants less susceptible to many problems, or less subject to specific serious problems. Some plants that are relatively disease prone (like fruit trees) can still be managed organically, but may require more effort – evaluate your choices accordingly.

Plant correctly. Make sure you understand your plant’s soil needs, and how deep it should be planted. Time planting to reduce stress on woody and perennial plants, and when soil temperatures are right for annuals.

Water appropriately. Know your plants’ water needs – too much can be as bad as too little. Water the soil, not the foliage. Water early in the morning and use mulch to reduce evaporative loss.

Feed to provide the right nutrients, at the most advantageous time. Be aware of any special nutrient or micronutrient needs. Mature woody and perennial plants often do not need feeding.

Avoid having to prune, when possible; if you must prune, do it right and at the right time. Select plants of appropriate size. Prune for specific purpose, and time pruning to maximize healing and control growth response.

Prevention is better than treatment – know what your plants are susceptible to. Select trouble free plants and give them the care they need. If your plant has a known susceptibility, use cultural care and preventive treatments reduce the risks.

When problems do arise, diagnosis is the most important step. Know what sorts of pests and diseases are likely for your area and plants, and learn their symptoms. Make use of the resources available for accurate diagnoses.

Catch problems early and try non-spraying interventions first. Keep your eyes open for early signs of problems. Light infestations and early infections can sometimes be treated with cultural or physical interventions rather than spraying. Be willing to cut your losses and cull a problem plant to reduce the risks to others.

If you must treat a problem, use the most targeted and least harmful product available. Many organic products are effective on a fairly narrow range of problems. Be aware of what risks and environmental impacts the product may have, and about how long those impacts are present.

Learn active ingredient names – brands change, or can be misleading. A basic understanding of what the active ingredient is and how it works can greatly enhance your success using it.

Always read the label, and apply products in ways that minimize non-target contact. Apply where product and problem best intersect, based on pest behavior and product action. Avoid treating plants that are in flower, and apply as late in the evening as possible to reduce pollinator impacts. Where possible, reduce accessibility of the product to non-target organisms.