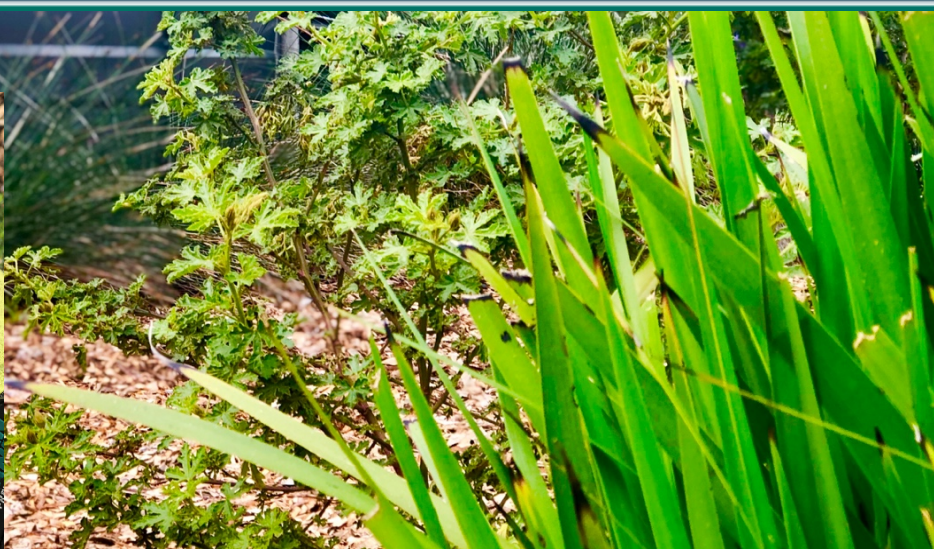


WATERWISE GARDENS

Nature Conservation Information Sheet



Better for everyone

Saving water in the garden saves you money and helps to conserve a precious resource, putting less pressure on the local environment. Here are some tips on how to create your own waterwise garden.

Planting Natives

Gardening with natives requires less water, nutrients and maintenance, which is better for us and better for the environment. We have a huge range of plants already adapted to our local climate, which is great news for gardeners as they are much more likely to thrive with minimal attention.

Try to select a range of shapes and sizes from trees through to shrubs and groundcovers. Think about where you need shade or privacy in the garden and provide that with trees or large shrubs. For more information see planting a native garden.

Creating Shade

Use local trees such as peppies, melaleucas and gums to provide natural cooling and shade, especially on the western side of your garden to moderate the hot afternoon sun and to the south to cool the summer breeze. Consider using deciduous trees to the north of your house to provide shade in summer and allow some winter sun in.

Limiting Lawn

Lawns can be very hungry and thirsty and it takes a lot of effort to keep them looking good.

- Limit areas of lawn to where you will use them
- Edge them with a physical barrier so that you don't need chemicals to keep the runners out of your garden beds.
- Only feed your lawn during autumn and spring and not when rain is forecast.
- Overfeeding the lawn just means more mowing for you and more fertilisers washing into our rivers causing toxic algal blooms.
- NEVER dump your lawn clippings or garden waste in the bush.

Developing Hydrozones

Divide your garden into hydrozones based on the watering needs of the plants.

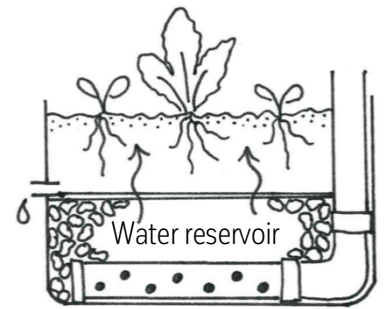
- Native gardens often require regular water through the first summer but require very little once established. Consider using drippers or hand watering.
- Lawns are thirsty and require regular water through hot, dry spells to keep them looking good. Use fixed spray, rotary or gear sprinklers to provide even watering without overspray.
- Productive plants and exotics generally have high water and nutrient needs and should ideally be kept in containers to minimise the leaching of nutrients into the environment. Use drippers, wicking beds or hand water.

Set up your watering stations based on these hydrozones and adjust according to the weather and the season.

Container Gardening

Exotics, fruit and vegetables with high water and nutrient needs are best grown in pots or wicking beds to minimise their water demands and any nutrients leaching into the environment. Make sure your wicking bed has the following features

- Waterproof liner or container
- A watering pipe and slotted pipe to keep the water reservoir topped up
- Gravel or blue metal to fill the reservoir
- A layer of geotextile or shade cloth between the water reservoir and the soil
- No more than 30cm of soil above the water reservoir so that the wicking action can reach the plants
- An overflow at the bottom of the soil so that it doesn't get waterlogged
- Water from the top until the seedlings are established and the soil is wicking effectively then water through the tube



Soil Amendments and Mulch

Improving the soil with organic matter increases the ability of the soil to hold moisture and nutrients.

- Use compost and soil improvers to build up the soil before you plant it out
- Add clay to sandy soils or gypsum to clay soils to improve the soil structure
- If your soils are water repellent, use a wetting agent
- Apply coarse mulch or woodchips as a thick layer (5-10cm)
- Avoid very dark mulches as these will get too hot in summer and bake your plants
- Keep adding mulch to build the soil over time, retain soil moisture and suppress weeds

Other Water Sources

Install a greywater system and/or a rainwater tank as alternative water supplies.



- Rainwater tanks should be installed with first flush diverters, insect protection and backflow prevention
- Greywater systems are best installed during the building process but there are some retrofitting options for using laundry water and for houses on stumps – ask your plumber or plumbing supply shop
- Greywater needs to be delivered using an approved dripper systems with purple coloured pipes and the pipes should be covered with a thick layer of mulch
- Visit https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Greywater for information on greywater systems and approvals
- Visit https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/sitecore/content/Healthy-WA/Articles/U_Z/Water-tanks-on-your-property for more information on installing a rainwater tank

DESIGNING YOUR OWN WATERWISE GARDEN

Key things to consider



Divide the garden into **hydrozones** based on the water and nutrient needs

Zone 1 Native Garden

Minimal water and fertiliser needs
Mainly used during establishment

Zone 2 Lawn

High water and fertiliser needs
Limit **lawn** to where you will use it

Zone 3 Vegies and Exotics

High water and fertiliser needs
Use **pots** and **wicking beds**

Establish a native **verge garden** and encourage the neighbours to do the same

Careful placement of **trees** will provide shade and reduce water demands in summer

Mulch all garden beds heavily with coarse **mulch** to retain soil moisture



Install a **grey water** system and use it to water the garden

Install a **water tank**

Consider using **deciduous trees** on the northern side of your house to provide shade in summer and sun in winter

Select **local native plants** where possible as they are adapted to the local soils and climate and require minimal maintenance

Improve your soils with **compost**, **wetting agents** and **soil conditioners** to reduce the need for extra water and nutrients