

Factsheet



Waterwise Gardening



Perth households use more water on their gardens on average than they use in their homes. However, there are a number of simple steps you can take to create an attractive and colourful waterwise garden.

By creating a waterwise garden you are not only helping save this precious resource, but will also reap the savings of the cost of your water usage in the future.

Here are some simple steps to follow to create a waterwise garden:

1. Creating and planning a waterwise garden zone by zone

Start with a manageable area of your garden to create your first waterwise zone. Make sure you remove weeds and grass from the area and then decide on the type of garden you want to establish. Think about the sizes of plants you would like to incorporate – they may be low shrubs and ground covers or 2m shrubs to screen out a fence.

2. Improve your soil in the zone

Most plants have feeder roots in the top 30cm of the soil. The more water and nutrients the soil holds, the healthier the plant. The easiest time to improve the soil is at planting when the appropriate organic matter and soil improvers can be thoroughly mixed through the top 30cm of the soil.

3. Source your plants

It is important to choose waterwise plants, such as natives that have their origins in WA. A good, local specialist nursery can help and the Water Corporation's website is also a useful source of information and lists suggested waterwise plants by the region. Visit www.watercorporation.com.au/save-water/waterwise-plants-search. The Australian Native Nurseries' website, www.australiannativenursery.com.au/ also has a useful list with their retail nursery based here in WA in Oakford.

Some other good local nurseries to try include:

APACE (open weekdays only)
www.apacewa.org.au/
1 Johannah Street
North Fremantle
9336 1262

Men of the Trees
www.menofthetrees.com.au/branches/rockingham-kwinana/
Elanora Drive (in Golf Course)
Rockingham
9527 3142

Find more around Perth in the Yellow Pages under "Native Nurseries"

It is also a good idea to plant your garden at the onset of winter, to give them the best chance of getting established before the onset of summer.

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4. Use waterwise mulch

Once you have planted out your new waterwise garden, place a protective layer of waterwise mulch over the soil in order to save more water. Exposing bare soil to the sun kills valuable soil life and causes significant water loss due to evaporation and waterwise mulch helps to prevent this. Waterwise mulch also reduces weeds and if organic material is used, will break down over time and feed the soil.

5. Water efficiently

Remember that the top 30cm of soil is where the feeder roots of most plants are. So each time we water we should put on just enough to wet down that far. Getting water as close to the roots as possible is the most efficient way to water your garden, so consider dripper systems for your garden beds (read our fact sheet on dripper systems).

For the first summer of your new native garden, water in the early morning 2-3 times a week until new leaves appear. Then drop back to watering to 2 litres, 1-2 times a fortnight for the first two summers. Avoid light, frequent watering as this encourages seedlings to develop surface roots and be dependent on watering.