

WaterWise in the Garden

Queenslanders use about half their household water outdoors and in the garden – 610 million litres of water a day.

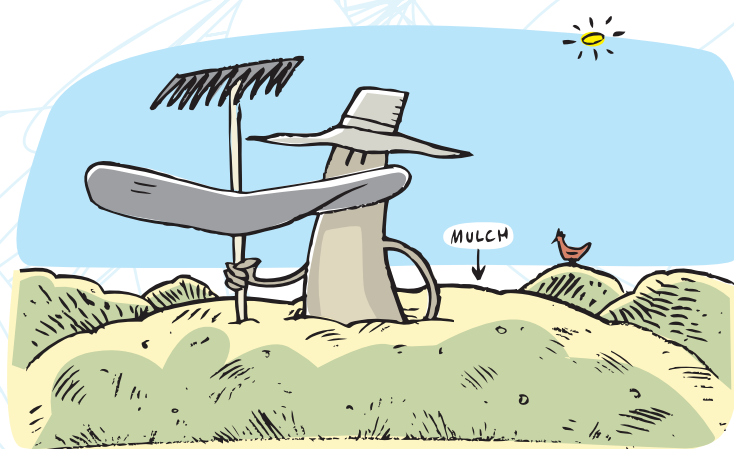
Careful planning and good gardening habits can make a significant difference in reducing your garden's needs.

Check with your council for any water restrictions in your area and water only when necessary.

Change Your Habits

- ▶ Plan carefully – select the right plants, group them together according to their water needs and create wind breaks
- ▶ Improve your soil – adding organic matter (compost or manure) improves the soil's ability to hold moisture. Add a 20cm bed of compost before you plant
- ▶ Fertilise modestly – fertiliser promotes growth but also the plant's moisture requirements
- ▶ Control weeds – weeds are water thieves
- ▶ Mulch generously - it reduces water loss by up to 70 percent, improves your soil and discourages weeds
- ▶ Prune shrubs – pruning after spring reduces the leaf area and reduces the shrub's water needs

Tip for Mulching: *Chipped tree waste is the best and least expensive mulch. Mulch should be applied twice a year, in autumn and spring.*



Select the Right Plants

Choosing the right plants for your local climate can save water and your time in caring for them.

There is a range of native and exotic plants that look great and thrive in dry conditions.

Speak to your local nursery for recommendations on which plants suit your environment.

What to Look For:

Small leaves: Water efficient plants have small leaves, often needle-like or rounded to minimise surface area.

Light leaf colours: High water use plants have large, dark leaves. Water efficient plants tend to have light green, grey green or blue green foliage.

factsheet

Hairy leaves: Hairs surrounding the plant's pores act as a wind break and reduce moisture loss.

Tough surfaces: Water efficient plants have tough, hard and sometimes waxy surface to their leaves.

Internal water sources: Water may be stored in many different parts of a plant, including the trunk, leaves and/or root system.

Deep root systems: Water efficient plants develop deep root systems that search for water.

Protected pores: Plants lose water through small pore-like openings in their leaves. Water efficient plants have fewer pores to minimise water loss. They may also have most of their pores on the underside of their leaves, protected from the sun and wind.

Strong internal structures: A strong internal structure that prevents wilting is a feature of water efficient plants. This ensures they can survive prolonged periods of heat stress.

WaterWise Lawns

Lawns require more water than other areas of your garden and therefore offer the best opportunity to save water.

What you can do:

- Consider paving or ground covers as alternatives
- Use fertiliser sparingly
- Water only when the lawn begins to show signs of stress then give it a good long drink. This promotes a healthy root system

- Adjust the cutting height of your mower. Leave 15-25 mm of grass (up to 40mm in hot weather) to protect the soil surface and reduce evaporation
- Switch to a drought resistant grass variety. These include Sir Walter Soft Leaf Buffalo, Palmetto, Windsor Green Couch, Dawson Creeping Bluegrass, Greenlees Park Couch

WaterWise Pot Plants

You can have lush pot plants that don't need a lot of water.

- Use potting mix with high organic matter content – look for one that conforms to the Australian Standard AS 3743:2003
- Add soil wetting agents or soil crystals to prevent the soil becoming too dry
- Before planting in a terracotta pot, make sure it is moisture proof either by painting a liquid sealant on the inside of the pot or lining the inside of the pot with polythene (ensuring that you cut a hole in the polythene to align with the drainage hole of the pot)
- Use only the amount of fertiliser required for pot plants - high nitrogen fertilisers often promote leaf growth at the expense of flowers
- Pick the right pot – a small pot will stress and restrict the plant; a big pot will mean your plant will need more water
- Water only when necessary – damp potting mix does not need more water
- Allow room for 50mm of mulch in your pot