

Keeping your garden alive in dry times

When watering your garden this summer, remember that a little goes a long way. Your garden does not require much water to survive and there are several measures you can take to keep your garden alive in dry conditions.



Benefits of water-wise gardening

Droughts and water restrictions are not the only reasons to save water in the garden. Waterwise gardeners can reap several other benefits, such as:

Saving money

When you save water, you also save money on your water bill.

Saving time

Waterwise gardens are low-maintenance gardens. By reducing lawn areas and using mulch, landscaping and watering systems effectively, your waterwise garden will require much less work.

Helping to save the environment

Waterwise gardens help the environment by saving water, reducing stormwater run-off and limiting the use of chemicals and fertilisers.

Assess your watering needs

Often, gardeners water their plants more than necessary, which creates a 'need'. Gradually reduce your plants' water dependency by stretching out the frequency between each watering. If you water your plants every five days and they are healthy, try stretching this out to 10 days, then 15 and so on. Many plants can survive for a month without being watered.

Remember that many plants go into a dormant state in summer and recover when the seasons change.

Use grey water

Your garden doesn't need to rely on drinking water. Using grey water from your bathroom or laundry is an effective water-efficient way of keeping your garden alive, especially in dry times.

Most household water consumption is used on the garden. Using grey water from the house can significantly reduce your water use and save you money while maintaining a healthy garden.

There are many products available to allow you to reuse your grey water as a source of garden watering. Grey water use can carry health and environmental risks if not used correctly. For more information, visit the Environmental Protection Authority web site at www.epa.vic.gov.au or speak to your plumber.



Add mulch, save water

Effective mulching can reduce evaporation by up to 70%. Using a thick layer of mulch (at least 75mm) also prevents erosion, discourages weed growth, maintains a consistent soil temperature and enriches the soil.

All parts of the garden can be mulched. Use an organic mulch for areas of the garden with plants that change with the seasons, such as roses, annuals and perennials. In 'no-dig' areas, scoria or gravel are more effective around natives, proteas, shrubs, bushes and Mediterranean plants.

Keep mulch clear of tree trunks and plant stems, though, to avoid the risk of fungal problems.



Lawns

To keep your lawn alive in dry times, raise your mower blades and allow the lawn to grow higher. This will help the lawn to shade itself so it won't suffer from sunburn.

Lawns also bounce back when wetter weather returns, so aerate your lawns with a garden fork to help the rain penetrate into the soil.

Lawns typically need more water than the rest of the garden. Reducing your lawn areas and replacing them with paving or ground-covering plants is a very effective way of saving water and money. Ask your nursery for advice on suitable grass varieties for your area.

Remember, lawns bounce back!

Trees and shrubs

If your trees and shrubs are stressed and dropping leaves in summer, try creating holes around the root zone and fill them with soil treated with water saving crystals. This will help the water get down to the roots.

Prune off excess foliage from your shrubs to reduce their need for water. Making a small moat around the root zone will also keep water from running off. And don't forget to mulch!



New plantings – choose drought-tolerant plants

When choosing new plants, ask your local nursery or garden centre which ones are drought-tolerant. Many plants, especially native plants, can survive with very little water. There are many native plants with unique colours, flowers and formations. Choosing these plants will result in a beautiful, low-maintenance garden and save you water and money.

Before putting new plants in the ground, add some water saving crystals to the soil. Place those plants with similar watering needs together to make the best use of each watering. Setting windbreaks will also protect delicate plants and reduce the need for watering.

Pot plants

Use a potting mix with a high organic matter content to help your pot plants hold water and nutrients.

Using soil wetting agents and water saving crystals will prevent the soil from getting too dry and will direct the water to the plant roots. Ask your local nursery for further advice on these products.

Remember to mulch your pot plants, too. Allow 50mm for mulch when establishing your pot plants, but keep the mulch clear of stems.

Many pot plants will wilt a little in hot weather and may seem to die off during summer. However, they usually bounce back by autumn if you keep the soil moist.



So remember...

To keep your garden alive and save water:

1. Use mulch
2. Use grey water
3. Use drought-tolerant plants

And remember, lawns bounce back!

Want to find out more?

For information on water restrictions or water saving measures in your area, visit

www.wannonwater.com.au

For more water saving ideas, visit

savewater.com.au

Garden watering – a little goes a long way

