

# Creating a waterwise coastal garden.

In a coastal garden you need to choose plants that will tolerate generally alkaline soils and varying degrees of onshore winds. Despite these often rugged conditions there are plenty to choose from.

What's right for your garden will depend on the size and style of your garden and the overall effect you want to achieve. For your coastal garden to be successful and rewarding you will need to carry out soil improvement prior to planting, mulch after planting, and install an efficient irrigation system.

## SOIL IMPROVEMENT

Soil improvement should be carried out prior to planting. The best soil improver is organic matter. It dramatically increases the moisture and nutrient holding capacity of sandy soil and encourages the all important soil micro fauna that are vital for healthy plant growth.

Improving the soil is a simple process:

- Dig a hole 25 to 30cm deep and, at a minimum, 3 times the width of the pot. The wider the better.
- Replace half the soil with organic matter.
- Mix thoroughly and replace in the hole in a shallow saucer shape.
- Take the plant out of the pot and place in the bottom of the saucer.
- Water in well, applying a wetting agent if necessary.
- Organic matter can be purchased as compost, soil improver or soil conditioner.

In addition to organic matter, the following can also be incorporated into the soil at planting time:

- Bentonite Clay (sandy soils only).
- Gypsum (reactive clay soils only).
- Spongelite and Zeolite (all soil types).
- Water storage polymers sold as granules or in sealed bags.

## MULCHING

Bare soil encourages weeds, wastes water and increases stress upon plants. A waterwise mulch spread to a depth of 50 to 75mm will reduce evaporation from the soil surface by as much as 70%. It will also prevent erosion, reduce weeds, reduce temperature fluctuation in the soil, slowly break down over time to feed the soil and improve the overall appearance of the garden. A good Waterwise mulch is one that has large, irregularly shaped particles that hold little, if any, water. Always keep mulch just clear of stems and trunks and be prepared to spread more mulch over the surface as the material breaks down to feed the soil.

## IRRIGATION

The most efficient irrigation systems are those that deliver the right amount of water to the right place, at the right time, and with a minimum of wastage. The simplest and most efficient system available to the home gardener is known variously as sub-irrigation, integrated dripper or in-line dripper. It is simple to install and delivers water directly to the root system with little or no evaporative loss. It is also subject to a Waterwise rebate. For details on the Waterwise rebates available go to [www.water.wa.gov.au](http://www.water.wa.gov.au).

For further information and expert assistance with irrigation, contact either your local Waterwise Garden Irrigator or Waterwise Irrigation Design Shop. To find your closest Waterwise Specialist check on [www.watercorporation.com.au](http://www.watercorporation.com.au) or call the Waterwise Helpline on 13 10 39.

## WATERING ZONES

Grouping plants with similar water needs together into watering zones where they can be watered only according to their needs ensures that no plants are over or under watered and therefore makes the most efficient use of the water.

Plants can be placed into one of 3 groups according to their watering needs. These classifications refer to the frequency of watering in summer when the plants have been established in improved soils. NB: at other times of year, all plants will need watering less frequently.



# Coastal plants and the water each one requires.

'Three Drop' plants require watering every one to two days in summer (more often than the two day a week watering roster in place for communities on scheme water south of Kalbarri and Kalgoorlie). 'Two Drop' plants require watering every three to seven days in summer (the watering roster of twice a week is mostly adequate for these plants). 'One Drop' plants require watering no more often than once a week in summer. Many one drop plants need less frequent watering (twice a week watering is too much for these plants).

Your local Waterwise Garden Centres can assist with plant selection and water needs. To find your closest Waterwise Garden Centre, check on [www.watercorporation.com.au](http://www.watercorporation.com.au) or call the Waterwise Helpline on 13 10 39.

## SOME WATERWISE PLANTS FOR A COASTAL GARDEN



The following short list of One Drop plants for coastal gardens is a selection taken from the Waterwise Plants for Perth database on the Water Corporation's website. To view images of these plants, browse other coastal plants (over 200) or select plants for your particular needs, go to [www.watercorporation.com.au](http://www.watercorporation.com.au)

NB: The information on the website is tailored to the Metropolitan area. However, it is relevant for most of the South West of WA.

### SMALL TREES TO 8M HIGH

#### Ashby's banksia - *banksia ashbyi*

A shrub to between 4 and 6metres high with long, deeply toothed leaves and bright orange, bird attractant flowers in winter.

#### Maro, Rottnest Pine - *Callitris preissii*

Dark green coniferous foliage. Fast growing as a rounded shrub at first before becoming more of a tree shape with age.

#### Red Flowering Gum - *Corymbia ficifolia*

Usually a small to medium tree with a short trunk and dense, dark green foliage that provides useful shade. In early summer large clusters of flowers are held clear of the foliage. Selected colour forms are often grafted on to a different rootstock.

#### Illyarrie - *Eucalyptus erythrocorys*

A highly ornamental medium, evergreen tree to 8m high and 4m wide with a single trunk. Dense, dark green leaves, bright red flower caps and golden yellow flowers.

#### Narrow Leaved Red Mallee, Coastal Dune Mallee - *Eucalyptus foecunda*

A slender, medium, evergreen tree to 5m high and 3m wide usually with many trunks. Dark, shiny, narrow, green

leaves and masses of small, cream to white flowers in autumn or winter. Bird attractant.

#### *Metrosideros kermadecensis*

An evergreen shrub or small tree with red new growth becoming creamy yellow variegated as it matures. Red flowers in summer and autumn.

### SHRUBS 1 TO 2M HIGH

#### Puno, Sandplain Bottlebrush - *Beaufortia squarrosa*

Fast growing but variable, usually open natured shrub. Small bright green leaves clasp the stems. Delicate, massed, brightly coloured flowers peaking in late summer and spring.

#### Bluebell Creeper, Australian Bluebell - *Billardiera heterophylla*

A vigorous semi climbing shrub with reddish stems, bright green foliage and small clusters of pendant blue bell shaped flowers in spring and summer.

#### Rock Rose, Laudanum - *Cistus*

Small shrubs from around the Mediterranean. Most are relatively short lived. Large showy flowers are produced in summer.

#### Mirror Bush - *Coprosma*

A wide range of generally tough shrubs grown for their decorative glossy foliage.

#### Correa, Native Fuchsia - *Correa backhouseana*

Dark green, oval leaves and cream to green tubular flowers in late winter to spring. Bird attractant. Tolerates full coastal exposure.

#### Emu Bush, Fuchsia Bush - *Eremophila glabra*

Ornamental, evergreen, small shrubs or ground covers. Tubular, bird attractant flowers in spring and summer.

#### Golden Daisy Bush, Resin Bush - *Euryops pectinatus*

Rounded shrub with grey-green divided foliage and bright yellow daisy flowers in spring and summer. Grows in sun or light shade.

#### Ellendale Dragon - *Grevillea*

Small spreading shrub to 1.5m high and wide with fine, grey-green foliage and clusters of red pendant flowers for much of the year.

#### *Guichenotia ledifolia*

A spreading shrub with very attractive silvery-grey divided foliage and pink to purple pendant flowers from late winter to spring. Withstands full coastal exposure.

#### Tea Tree - *Leptospermum polygalifolium*

A range of shrubs with generally bright green foliage and massed pearl white flowers in late spring to early summer. Prune after flowering to maintain shape.

#### Coastal Daisy - *Olearia axillaris*

Small, soft, silvery-grey leaves and stems with tiny yellow flowers towards the tips in late spring to early summer.

**Remember, that by investing in waterwise planning and preparation of your garden now, you will reap savings in the cost of water in the future. For more waterwise plants go to The Waterwise Plants for Perth database on [www.watercorporation.com.au](http://www.watercorporation.com.au) under 'Being Waterwise'.**