

creating a waterwise garden

improve your soil

Most plants have their feeder roots in the top 30cm of soil. Water and nutrient rich soil means healthier plants. WA's sandy soil is naturally very nutrient poor and does not hold water well. Improving sandy soil is simple - just add organic matter, such as compost, soil improver, a soil amendment like bentonite clay, spongolite and zeolite or a loamy or heavier soil.

The easiest time to improve the soil is at planting when organic matter and soil amendments can be thoroughly mixed through the top 30cm of soil. You can often find soil improvers that also contain wetting agents, which help water penetrate to the roots of your plants.

If your plants are already established, spread a layer of compost on top of the soil and then cover it with a layer of waterwise mulch. A thin layer of compost spread over a lawn that was laid on poorly prepared soil will encourage healthy growth.

use waterwise mulch

Exposing bare soil to the sun kills valuable soil life and causes significant moisture loss due to evaporation. Placing a protective layer of waterwise mulch over the soil saves a lot of water. It also protects soil life, reduces weeds and plant stress and, if organic material is used, it will break down over time and feed the soil. Waterwise mulch has large, chunky pieces that hold little or no water. To test if a mulch is waterwise feel it – it should be hard and hurt your feet to walk on it.

use fertiliser sparingly

Much of the fertiliser we use does not get taken up by plants, instead it is released into the environment where it has the potential to cause significant damage. Reducing the amount of fertiliser used means that less nutrients will find their way into our rivers and groundwater. Use a slow release fertiliser designed to provide a steady supply of nutrients over a longer period of time.

more information

For professional advice, visit our website to find a Waterwise Specialist near you. They include Garden Designers, Garden Centres, Garden Irrigators, Irrigation Design Shops, Landscapers, Lawnmowing Contractors, Plumbers and Water Auditors. Waterwise Specialists have been trained especially to help you save water by providing specialist advice on waterwise products and services for your home and garden.

Look for the Waterwise Approved and Smart Approved WaterMark symbols when choosing gardening products such as mulch, plants, greywater systems and sprinklers.

Water and fertiliser go hand in hand. Lawns are commonly over fertilised. If the soil has been amended only small amounts of fertiliser are required. For plants, fertiliser needs to be put near the roots or it will be wasted. Generally it is better to apply a little fertiliser often during warmer months. Feeding plants in winter is wasteful.

water efficiently

To prevent overwatering your garden, water just enough to penetrate the top 30cm of soil, where the feeder roots are. Sandy soils that have been improved only need a standard drink of 10mm, no matter what the plant. To find out the recommended watering times for your irrigation system visit our website.

Getting as close to the roots as possible is the most efficient way to water your garden. Regularly check that your irrigation system has no leaks and is working correctly. When replacing broken sprinklers, always replace like with like. Check that your irrigation is watering the garden and not the road, driveway or pavement.

choose waterwise

Choose your plants with our Waterwise Plants for WA online directory. Local native plants are perfectly adapted to our climate and have evolved over millions of years. Choose a Waterwise Specialist who has been trained to provide advice on water saving products and services.

make your verge waterwise

Replace surplus lawn – you will save time and money on watering, fertilising, mowing and weeding. A verge planted with waterwise plants or a waterwise ground cover is not that difficult or expensive to do.

Remember to consult your council regarding height restrictions and other verge treatment guidelines.

