

Western Australia is a dry State in a dry continent. Water is vital to life and our quality of life and it supports the natural environment, public health, the economy, community amenity and recreation.

To ensure that there is enough water for all, we need to address the challenges of our drying climate, increasing population and minimising our environmental impact. We all need to work together to reduce our water use, recycle more water and develop new sources to supplement existing supplies.

This information sheet is one of a series designed to enhance community understanding of water related topics.

Background

Western Australians love their gardens. In Perth, garden irrigation accounts for 39% of an average household's scheme water consumption (Figure 1). Although it has decreased over the past decade (down from 54% in 2001), garden irrigation remains the single highest use of scheme water by residential customers.

It is important that we make our gardens more water efficient to better suit our drying climate while maintaining the essential amenity they provide to our community. This information sheet outlines options to help you create a more waterwise garden. Taking the time to plan and invest in a waterwise garden will save you water and money in the long term.

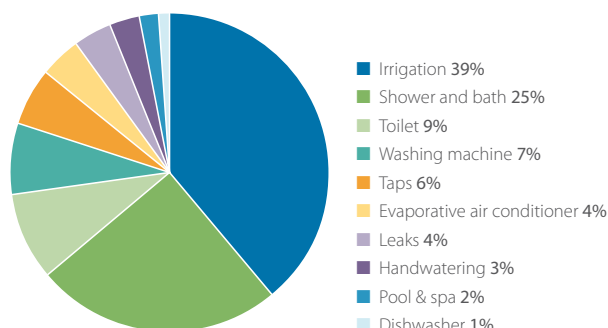


Figure 1 Average Perth residential water use by area (%)

Garden design

To deliver the right amount of water to different groups of plants (without over or under watering), divide your garden into watering zones (i.e. hydrozones). Hydrozoning is grouping plants with similar water needs together.

Improve the soil

Western Australia's sandy soils are typically nutrient poor and do not retain water well, this is particularly so in Perth on the Swan Coastal Plain. Sandy soils can be improved with the addition of organic matter such as compost, soil improver, and soil amendments like Bentonite clay or zeolite. Soil can be improved at the time of planting or by adding a layer of compost to existing plants.

Mulch, mulch, mulch

Applying up to 10cm of good waterwise mulch can greatly reduce evaporation loss. It also has many other benefits, such as improving the soil, reducing plant stress and weed growth, as well as improving the appearance of your garden.

The best mulch to use has large chunky particles, which hold little to no water. Look for mulch with the Smart Approved WaterMark.



Choose efficient irrigation

The most efficient irrigation system to use is a dripper system because water can be delivered to where the plants need it, their roots.

The Waterwise Garden Irrigator program provides industry standards for the design, installation and maintenance of your irrigation system. To find a Waterwise Garden Irrigator or your nearest Waterwise Irrigation Design Shop visit watercorporation.com.au and follow the 'Being waterwise' links.

Lawn irrigation

The most practical way to irrigate lawns is via sprinklers. MP rotator sprinkler is considered very efficient. Visit our website for more information on sprinkler types and their equivalent recommended run times.

Remember only 10mm is required for areas south of Kalbarri and 20mm for areas north of Kalbarri. Irrigation should occur only once on your watering day either before 9am or after 6pm. A catch cup test is recommended to check your irrigation time is not over the specified application rate. Over watering is actually a waste and sprinkler rosters are designed with our climate in mind. Every time we water we should irrigate just enough to penetrate the top 30cm of soil, where the feeder roots are.

If you have areas of brown patches in your lawn, consider installing an extra sprinkler in this spot rather than increasing the irrigation time. Often sprinkler coverage does not overlap. It is also important to have the same type of sprinklers to ensure application rates are consistent.

System maintenance

It's easy to 'set and forget' your irrigation so it is important to regularly check that the system is working correctly. It's also important to check your back up battery which provides power to your irrigation system during a blackout.

Irrigation systems should also be checked regularly to fix any leaks and address any inappropriate irrigation of roads and paved areas.

A winter sprinkler ban applies in Perth and some parts of the South West, during which your irrigation system should be turned off.

Lawn

Natural

While lawn can be an aesthetic and functional addition to any garden (as well as providing cooling benefits) it does generally require more water than waterwise garden beds, and more maintenance in terms of fertilising and mowing. The Corporation advises householders to consider how much lawn they need, and specifically where they need it, when planning a new garden.

When deciding on what lawn to plant, drought tolerant varieties such as Couch, Buffalo, Zoysia, Saltene or Kikuyu are more likely to survive in Perth's climate.

Synthetic

Synthetic or artificial turf is another option to use less water in a garden. The Corporation supports customer choice in the installation of synthetic lawn. However we do encourage our customers to do their own research before making this decision as there are other issues to consider (eg synthetic lawn can be hot to walk on).

Choose waterwise plants

When planning or replacing garden plants you should visit the Waterwise Plants for WA database on the Water Corporation's website. The database lists many waterwise plants for each region of the State. Waterwise plants require less water than other species and the use of natives endemic to your area can attract wildlife to your garden.

Consider a garden bore

Garden bores draw water from shallow groundwater aquifers and are generally a better alternative to scheme water for garden irrigation as they reduce demand on our precious drinking water sources.

Consider sharing a bore with your neighbour. You can share the cost of installing the bore and as well as save money and water.

To find out whether a bore is suitable for your garden consult the Department of Water's 'Groundwater Atlas for Perth'.

Convert to a waterwise verge

Get rid of unnecessary 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 local council regarding height restrictions and other verge treatment guidelines.

Consider a greywater system

Greywater systems divert water from your bathroom and laundry for use in garden irrigation. The Water Corporation supports customer choice to use greywater for non drinking purposes such as garden irrigation. The use of household recycling solutions that make the safest and best use of greywater, where care is taken to protect the environment, human and animal health, is also encouraged.

Rain and soil moisture sensors

Rain sensors and soil moisture sensors are designed to shut down your irrigation system either when it rains or when there is adequate soil moisture so as not to require irrigation.

The Corporation supports customer choice in the installation of rain and soil moisture sensors.

Examples of a waterwise garden design

For examples of waterwise garden designs appropriate for your region visit the Hints and Tips page on the Corporation's website.

Useful Links

- Dos and don'ts for sprinklers and outdoor use watercorporation.com.au/R/restrictions_rules.cfm
- Watering times for your sprinkler watercorporation.com.au/W/watering_times_sprinklers.cfm
- Soil improvement brochure
watercorporation.com.au/_files/PublicationsRegister/11/Water_Saving_Ideas_Soil_Improvement.pdf
- Waterwise Plants for Western Australia watercorporation.com.au/W/waterwise_plants.cfm
- Creating a Waterwise Garden watercorporation.com.au/_files/waterwise/Creating_a_waterwise_garden.pdf
- Waterwise hints and tips watercorporation.com.au/P/publications_water_saving.cfm?uid=1824-6338-0121-6842
- Irrigation Australia Website
irrigation.org.au/index.cfm?event=&pageuid=CB38A0EF-1708-51EB-A6F5F1AC5793752F
- Greywater Recycling Information Sheet thinking50.com.au/go/our-publications/information-sheets

More Information

To find out more about how the Water Corporation is working to ensure water for all, forever, please visit: watercorporation.com.au/waterforever or phone **13 10 39** and we will post you a copy of our 50 year plan.

