

## Water saving tips for your garden

Your garden can survive with very little water if you follow a few simple practices.

### Use mulch

Using mulch liberally and regularly helps to retain soil moisture. It does this by reducing evaporation, restricting weed growth, and improving soil structure as it breaks down. It also improves plant growth by providing insulation for plant roots.

There are many different types of mulch to choose from. Organic mulch, such as sugar cane mulch or pine bark, will decompose over time and help improve your soil.

Use a layer of mulch over the surface of your garden soil. Organic mulch should be re-applied frequently, preferably in autumn and spring, to replace the broken-down mulch.



### Improve your soil

Your soil acts as a reservoir for water, keeping your plants alive. It can store a lot more water if it includes plenty of organic matter. Add plenty of compost, mulch or manure whenever you can.

Wetting agents allow water to easily soak into the soil, which may help if your soil has difficulty absorbing water.



### Watering tips

Water only when your garden or lawn needs it—for example, when plants are showing signs of stress or the soil is dry. Apply enough water to replenish the soil profile, ensuring the amount is adequate to reach the plant root zones. Thorough but infrequent watering encourages plants to develop deeper root systems, giving them inbuilt drought protection. This works for lawns as well as for garden plants.

Watch the weather. Rainfall is a free and easy way to water your garden. Be aware of your local water restrictions and water only when allowed.



## Lawn care

Lawns can be trained to survive on minimal water. Delaying watering and mowing will help the lawn to establish a strong root system. Mow your lawn on the highest setting—at least 3 centimetres—to avoid ‘scalping’ your lawn. This will minimise evaporation from the soil below, and ensure that roots are sheltered from the harsh sun. Check that your mower blades are sharp—blunt blades damage the grass and lead to higher water loss. Fertilise only lightly—too much fertiliser encourages excessive growth and water use.



## Garden planning

Incorporate water saving principles into your garden. Consider providing shade and windbreaks to protect your plants from evaporation. Group plants with higher water needs together so that you only need to water this part of your garden. For the remainder of your garden, select water-efficient plants which can survive dry spells.

## Plant selection

There are many native and exotic plants which look great and thrive in low-moisture environments. To find water-efficient plants suited to your local area use the Waterwise Plant Selector [www.derm.qld.gov.au/waterwise/plantselector](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/waterwise/plantselector). Look for plants with water-saving features such as:

- ◆ small leaves
- ◆ light coloured leaves
- ◆ sparse or protected pores in the leaf surface
- ◆ hairy or tough leaf surfaces
- ◆ internal water storage, in stems, trunks or roots
- ◆ deep root systems
- ◆ strong internal structures.

More detailed advice on waterwise gardening is available on the DERM website, including information about:

- ◆ planning a water efficient garden
- ◆ watering your garden
- ◆ mulch and your garden
- ◆ maintaining your lawn
- ◆ composting
- ◆ growing fruit, vegetables and herbs
- ◆ growing plants in pots or containers
- ◆ rainwater tanks
- ◆ understand your soil type
- ◆ gardening with greywater.

### More information

Other water-efficient gardening guides are available on the Department of Environment and Resource Management website [www.derm.qld.gov.au/waterwise](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/waterwise).