

Is your garden as water smart as you?

You would have already discovered and implemented ways of conserving water around your home. The reduced water level in our dams and subsequent water restrictions have given us all a challenge in changing our habits to conserve water. Overall, we've all done well in being 'water smart' in the way we use water in our homes, but is your garden as water smart as you? By changing your gardening habits, you can make a significant difference in the water needs of your garden while continuing to meet the 'Target 140 litres/day/person' as part of the current Level 5 water restrictions.

Soil... your water saving champion

The type of soil you have in your garden is a key factor in determining your garden's health. There are many different types of soil and some hold water better than others. By taking the time to understand the soil type in your garden, you can then take steps to improve soil structure and moisture holding capacity such as:

- adding organic matter such as compost, mulch and manures; and
- using water crystals, soil wetting agents and gypsum.

Mulch, mulch, mulch!

This is one of the quickest, easiest and most cost-effective ways to save water in your garden. Mulching liberally and regularly will help to preserve soil moisture and Spring is one of the best times of year to do this. Mulching will benefit your garden by:

- reducing water loss through evaporation;
- suppressing weed growth (weeds are water thieves);
- reducing wind and water erosion by allowing water to penetrate the soil;
- encouraging better root growth by insulating soil from temperature fluctuations; and
- if applied regularly, since it will break down over time, mulch will improve the health and wellbeing of your soil.

Watering... make your garden smarter

Using these tips and tricks will make water work harder for your garden:

- watering deeply, less often, will help your plants establish deeper and stronger root systems to better cope with drought conditions;
- watering early in the morning or late in the afternoon will limit water loss through evaporation; and
- be innovative – fill an old plastic water bottle with a pin sized hole in the lid and place it at the base of the plant or tree to ensure a slow and deep watering – this is also an effective way to avoid evaporation!

Lawn... keeping it green

You can train your lawn to survive on minimal water by:

- raising the height of your lawn mower and keeping your grass at a slightly longer length to provide greater shade for your soil which will reduce moisture evaporation;
- delaying mowing which will allow the lawn to establish a strong root system;
- feeding your lawn less fertilizer to reduce excessive growth and water use; and
- controlling weeds – don't forget they are water thieves!

Plan... plant the smart stuff

If you're considering a new garden, careful planning can make a significant difference in reducing your garden's needs. Plan carefully to create a garden around local climate, soil type and topography, as well as incorporating water saving principles to ensure your garden design meets your lifestyle needs. A drought tolerant, hardy garden is essential for our sometimes harsh weather conditions. Consider the following:

- select hardy, drought-tolerant plants which are low maintenance and can withstand harsh drought conditions;
- group plants according to their water needs which creates water zones within your garden;
- natural water capture in times of high rainfall will reduce your watering needs; and
- understanding your backyard in terms of shaded areas and wind exposure will help you select and position plants to ensure the greatest water efficiency.

For more information on making your garden as water smart as you, visit our website at www.ipswichwater.com.au or call 07 3810 7855.



Spring into action... make your garden as water smart as you