

HOW TO

WaterWise Your Garden



'Water efficient plants' have features which minimise the need for frequent watering.



Firstly, the term 'water efficient plant' refers to the ability of a plant to minimise its need for frequent watering. This ability is based on its structural features and is often achieved through the reduction of transpiration (the loss of water from plants to the atmosphere). Water efficient plants may have one or several of the following features:

Small Leaves

Plants with small leaves are water efficient. They are often rounded or needle-like which reduces the surface area of a plant. Example: sheoaks (*Allocasuarina* and *Casuarina* species).

Hairy Leaves

Hairs surrounding the plant pores act like a windbreak, slowing down air movement over the pores, making the plant water efficient. Example: native coleus (*Plectranthus* species).

Light Leaf Colours

The colour of a plant's leaves is an excellent indicator of a plant's water requirements. A plant with light green, blue-green or grey-green leaves are typically low water use plants, while plants with soft, dark green surfaces are high water users.

Tough surfaces

Plants that are water efficient have tough hardy surfaces on their leaves. This includes plants with waxy surfaces.

Protected Pores

Plants lose water through small pore-like

openings on their leaves, much like humans do when they sweat. Water efficient plants have fewer pores, or pores that are on the underside of their leaves, in order to protect the plant's moisture from the sun and wind.

Strong Internal Structures

Plants with a strong internal structure can avoid wilting unlike plants with a weak internal structure that wilt during periods of heat stress and often die as a result.

Deep Root System

Plants with deep root systems are able to search for water deep in the ground and are not reliant of surface moisture. These plants often have roots that reach down to the water table, resulting in not needing to be watered.

There are many water efficient plants to choose from and there is sure to be something that will suit your garden's needs. If you are still not sure about identifying a water efficient plant, your local nursery will be able to assist you.

Watch this space for more great waterwise gardening articles on water wise concepts and terms, such as zoning, soil improvers, and water crystals.



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Being Waterwise is certainly the way of the future in relation to how we garden, but do we all really understand what the experts are actually asking us to do in our gardens? Terms such as water efficient plants, zoning, soil improvers, and water crystals, are thrown around every time waterwise gardening is mentioned. Although most people have some kind of garden, be it a balcony garden made up of pots or an award winning garden spread over an acre, we don't all know what these waterwise terms mean. So for those gardeners who are not completely confident with waterwise gardening terms, hopefully these facts will help you to understand and identify water efficient plants.

The term 'water efficient plant' is used a great deal when people talk about waterwise gardening, but what does it really mean? And how can you identify a water efficient plant from a water thirsty plant in your garden and at the local nursery?