

vegetation management

outside your property

Roadside works, including fire management, are the responsibility of the roadside manager, which is usually your local council or VicRoads. You must always obtain permission from your council (or VicRoads for most main roads) for any roadside works, including fire management and planting.

water storage

A fire can sometimes reduce or cut off the mains water supply to your property. To ensure you have water available:

- store water in the bath and laundry trough on days of high fire risk
- fill 200 litre drums and rubbish bins with water (non-potable water if possible) and place these strategically around your property before the fire season begins. Any water stored in this way should be covered for child safety
- consider installing an independent water supply, such as a storage tank. Other options for the storage of a large volume of water include a dam or swimming pool
- power may be cut off from your property during a fire so do not rely on electrical pumps alone to access stored water. Consider having a generator on standby.

in the event of a fire

If you intend to remain at your property during a bushfire, you will need access to an adequate water supply. Please note that if water restrictions are in force and a fire threatens your property, restrictions will be waived to allow you to defend your home.

Western Water works closely with the CFA in the event of a fire to provide information about the availability of water and access to alternative water supplies. We endeavour to maintain water supply to your property at all times. However, the demands of fire services and other residents during a fire may mean that we can not maintain water pressure or an uninterrupted supply to individual customers. If you are connected to a mains supply, please do not rely on this alone during a bushfire.

Please contact your local CFA for further advice on preparing your property and firefighting equipment.

Further information

Western Water

General Enquiries
1300 650 425
www.westernwater.com.au



CFA

Bushfire Information Line
1800 240 667
www.cfa.vic.gov.au



saving water

in the fire season

A guide to reducing fire hazards and conserving water

Every summer, our region experiences a high fire danger period. As the weather becomes hotter and drier, the vegetation that creates the fuel for fires dries out. This, in turn, increases the risk of grass and bushfires. Western Water has joined forces with the CFA to provide information on how to save water and reduce hazards around your home.



landscaping

Plants

As all types of plants can provide fuel for bushfires, we are unable to confidently recommend specific plant types to improve your safety. However, plants that may burn more easily include those that:

- create dry debris during the fire season
- have loose or flaky bark
- produce masses of very fine leaves
- have a very low moisture content.

Consider planting species that are suitable for the local environment and require minimal watering. Your nursery professional can recommend appropriate plant types.

It is also important to think about the arrangement of your garden. Plants and shrubs can be planted in clusters, with clear breaks between the groupings, to make it more difficult for fire to move from one area to another. Use paths, driveways and paved areas to create breaks in the fuel and save water at the same time by reducing green areas.

Lawns

Dry lawns are a fire risk, but the risk is greatly reduced if they are kept short. A minimum length of 50 millimetres helps shade the root zone, retain moisture and reduce evaporation rates.

Consider planting lawn varieties with deep root systems that require minimal watering. Grasses such as **Tall Fescue, Couch, Buffalo and Kikuyu** tolerate a wide range of soils and conditions. New varieties of grass for lawns are being developed. Talk to your local nursery or turf professional about the appropriate type of grass for you.

Don't forget that greywater can be used on the garden to conserve precious drinking water. Greywater is any non-toilet household wastewater. It includes wastewater from the bath, shower, hand basin, dishwasher, washing machine, laundry trough or kitchen sink.

While greywater is a suitable alternative to drinking water, there are wastewater reuse guidelines that should be followed. Western Water has produced an information booklet called **Tapping into Greywater** that contains useful information on greywater use in the garden. It can be downloaded from www.westernwater.com.au. It is also a good idea to check the current EPA guidelines on greywater use at www.epa.vic.gov.au or by calling the EPA Information Centre on (03) 9695 2722.

Mulching

Mulching is an effective way to maintain a waterwise garden as well-mulched plants help retain moisture and are more likely to survive dry weather. However, during a bushfire, burning embers can ignite dry mulch.

To help reduce the fire risk, contain mulch to small areas in garden beds by only mulching individual plants and their root systems.

Keep plant-based mulches wet during the fire season or cover them with a fire retardant material, such as soil or sand. Alternatives to plant-based mulch that will retain moisture include:

- pebbles and stones
- weed matting
- old carpet cut to fit around individual plants
- layers of wet newspaper secured with soil or rocks to retain moisture.

If you prefer plant-based materials, mulch your garden immediately following the fire season to allow it to break down over winter. Decomposed mulch will still provide good moisture retention during summer and is less likely to ignite than recently laid mulch.

more maintenance tips

Here are some other ideas for maintaining a fire-safe garden:

- prune tree branches that are low, overhang or touch a building
- clean any leaf build-up from gutters before the fire season and check regularly during summer as trees drop more leaves and bark in dry conditions
- remove combustible doormats, building materials, paint cans, fuel and wood heaps from around your home
- rake and remove all fuels, such as dry leaves, grass and twigs
- clear away dead undergrowth and fallen branches
- check for areas around buildings that may trap embers, such as under verandas. Seal gaps to stop embers getting into these areas and starting a spot fire
- plant a protective shield of trees around the house to slow the wind, cut down radiant heat and catch flying embers and sparks from a bushfire.