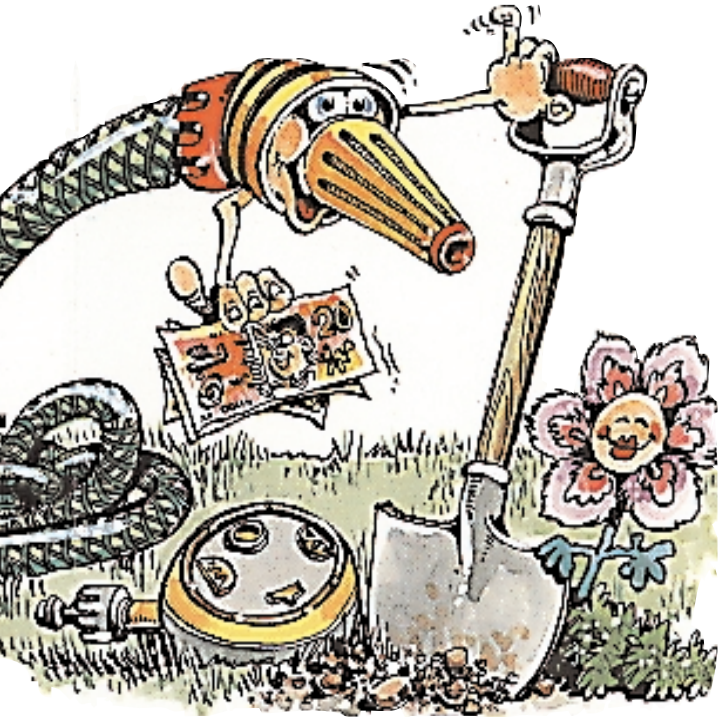


Saving Water and Money with Your Existing Lawn



**WESTERN
WATER**





Large backyards and lawns are historically a major part of Australian gardens. But have you ever paused to think just how much it costs to maintain your lawn?

The more that you water your lawn, the more it becomes dependent on you for water, and the more you have to mow it. This can be expensive and take a lot of time and effort.

For this reason, lawns should never be used as a 'fill in'. Hardy ground covers and paving are two of many lower water use alternatives.

Take a look at your garden to see if you need all the lawn you have. Some ways to reduce water use and work in your lawn are:

Improved Watering Practices

The most water efficient way to manage a lawn is to give it **just enough** to survive. By watering your lawn less frequently, you are ensuring a deep root system and a healthy lawn as your grass searches for water in the soil.

Only water when the grass shows signs of stress a loss of bright colour and a slight wilting. At this stage you have 24 to 48 hours to give the lawn a good, **deep** drink of water. (You should look to wet the soil to a depth of 15cm - check the depth of soil moisture using a moisture probe or skewer).

How much water you apply and how often you irrigate depends on the type of lawn, type of soil, climate and the time of year. Your irrigation professional or local nursery will be able to offer you advice on how much water to apply and how often to water your lawn.

The right time to water is 5 am to 8 am in the morning and 5 pm to 8 pm in the evening to minimise evaporation.

There is no need to water your lawn in rainy periods when the ground is naturally wet enough. People with automatic watering systems need to pay particular attention to ensure they are switched off during rainy periods.

Watering and Sprinkler Systems

Old watering systems are often poorly designed and fitted with sprinklers which waste water. Some of the common faults are misting, and sprinklers which water lawns and garden beds or paving at the same time. The “WaterWise in the Garden” brochure on watering systems details how you can reduce your water use by improving the efficiency of your irrigation system.

Fertilising Your Lawn

Cutting down on water use means you can reduce fertiliser use. Be aware that the directions on fertiliser bags often recommend excess nitrogen use. Fertilisers with manure content are ideal, as they help maintain the level of organic matter in the soil.

Mowing

Mowers should be set so that only one third of the leaf area is removed at any one time. This should leave a blade length of some 10 to 15mm. This amount of leaf protects the soil surface and reduces evaporation loss. Close mowing causes scalping and exposes the base of the grass and its roots to the sun.

Soil Improvement

Extra organic matter like manure mixed through the top 15cm of soil, will dramatically improve both the water and nutrient holding capacity of the soil, and help your lawn to use less water. Unfortunately, the only real opportunity to do this is before the lawn is established.

Coring and top dressing a lawn will help incorporate organic matter and reduce thatch, improving water absorption.

WaterWise Tips On Establishing A NEW Lawn

There are three ways to establish a lawn: turf rolls; runners; or seed.

Turf rolls offer instant cover and provide the most water efficient means of establishing a lawn in summer. However, it is best to establish new lawns during the cooler months of Spring and Autumn.

Take advantage of any delay by:

- Removing all weeds from the area;
- Improving the soil and drainage; and
- Mulching the area.

Choosing A Water Efficient Grass

Grasses such as Couch Grass eg. 'Windsor-green', 'Greenlees Park', Santa Anna, Kikuya, 'Wintergreen' and bluegrass eg. 'Dawson Creeping Bluegrass' have the lowest water demand. They also have a high drought tolerance.

Converting an Unwanted Lawn Area

Converting unwanted lawn to create a water efficient garden or paved entertainment area is relatively easy. There are two simple ways of killing grass and leaving the area ready:

- Use a herbicide containing the active ingredient glyphosate. Apply the chemical using a string guide to ensure you get complete coverage. This area can be replanted after 3 weeks.
- Block out the light to the area by laying a thick sheet of black polythene over it. After 3 to 6 weeks, all the grass will be dead.

The dead thatch can be left as a mulch while new plants are established; or removed and replaced with paving for that new entertainment area.

Victorian gardeners use 406,800,000 litres of water a day

The “WaterWise in the Garden” initiative has been introduced to help gardeners reduce their water consumption.

The Benefits of Being WaterWise

There are three major benefits to being WaterWise in your garden:

A WaterWise Gardener will Save Money ...

When we save water, we save money. By applying the “WaterWise in the Garden” ideas, you have the potential to cut your outdoor water use by up to 50% whilst still maintaining a green, pleasant and rewarding garden.

A WaterWise Garden is a Low Maintenance Garden ...

With smaller lawn areas, clever use of mulching and landscaping and a well designed irrigation system, WaterWise gardens are a *lot less work* than conventional gardens.

A WaterWise Garden is more natural and helps to save our environment ...

A WaterWise Gardener helps save our environment by:

- Reducing use of fertilisers and chemicals.
- Reducing water run-off to the stormwater system (which runs straight into our waterways).
- Helping to delay the need for further dams.

**WaterWise Gardening ...
Benefiting the Individual
and the Community**

WaterWise Gardening

Saves Water
Saves Work
Saves Money and
Saves Our Environment

Want More Information?

The “WaterWise in the Garden” initiative is designed to help gardeners by providing expert information on how to maintain a high quality garden but at the same time conserve water. Western Water and the Nursery Industry Association of Victoria are eager to help Victorian gardeners to be WaterWise.

For further advice, information and practical assistance on water conservation in the garden, speak to your local nursery industry professional or call:

Western Water
1300 650 425



Nursery Industry
Association of
Victoria
(03) 9576 0599



Brochures available in this series

- WaterWise Watering & Irrigation Systems
 - Successful Pot Plants Using Less Water
- How to Identify Water Efficient Plants at a Glance
- You Can Have Beautiful Flowers and Still Conserve Water
 - Saving Water and Money with Your Existing Lawn
 - Water Efficient Shrubs

Western Water
www.westernwater.com.au