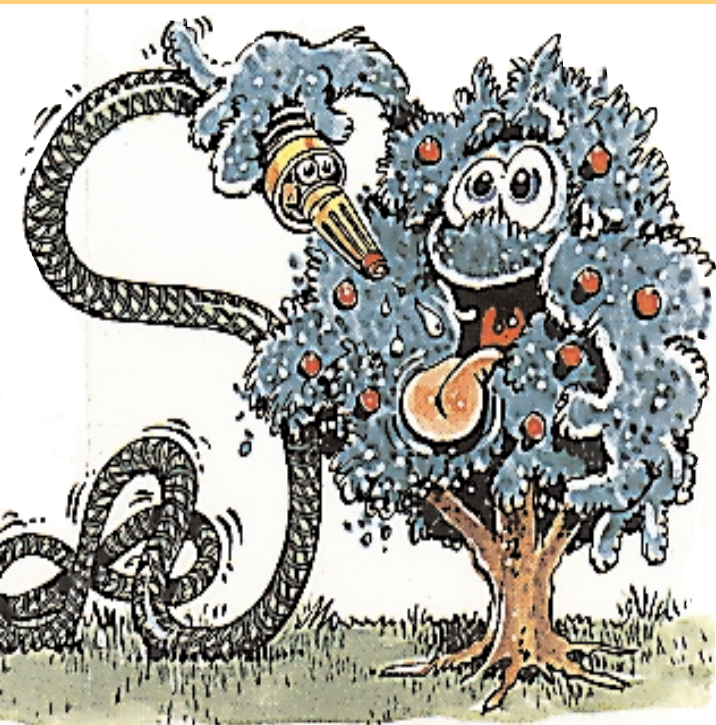


Water Efficient Shrubs



**WESTERN
WATER**





Shrubs are woody plants which form the backbone of our gardens as they provide size, texture and colour. They are found all over the world and have varying water requirements. Some come from deserts, where they survive extended dry periods, and others from tropical rainforests, where water is continually draining through the soil.

Here are a few tips on ways you can help your shrubs thrive but still conserve water.

Group your Shrubs

One of the most effective ways of saving water in the garden is to group your shrubs according to their water needs.

This will mean you can water everything in the area without overwatering your other shrubs.

Replant your Shrubs

Most of the high water use shrubs don't have deep root systems and can be replanted in winter to an area of shrubs with similar water needs.

Hardy, low water use and drought tolerant plants are more difficult to move, with their deep root systems.

Remember, if you decide to re-organise your garden, make sure you place the very tough shrubs on the exposed side to act as a windbreak and protect the more delicate shrubs.

Improve your soil before planting

Adding organic matter to your soil prior to planting will improve its moisture and nutrient holding capacity. Save water by simply adding a 20cm bed of organic mixture to your garden.

Water Efficient Shrubs

Mulching the area

Mulching your garden is an excellent way to reduce water lost through evaporation.

As well as conserving water, a 75mm bed of mulch spread over an area to be planted or an existing area will:

- Feed the plants
- Encourage earthworms
- Restrict weed growth
- Improve the soil
- Keep the roots cool

It's best to install a watering system which waters the roots of your shrubs, not the mulch. If the mulch is watered too regularly, you need to add manure to prevent the mulch drawing nitrogen away from the shrub.

Bought or homemade chipped tree waste is the best mulch. Other materials such as lucerne, hay, pea straw, seaweeds or compost can be used but tend to be more expensive.


Spring is the perfect time to apply the mulch which should be topped up twice a year in Autumn and Spring.

Fertilisers

Each type of shrub has its own special nutrient needs, but many people try to encourage lots of growth and use too much fertiliser.

You can cut the use of fertiliser in half by simply improving and mulching your soil.

This may not produce rapid plant growth, but the plants will be healthier and less susceptible to pests and diseases.



Irrigation

Micro-irrigation is ideal for shrubs. It is also:

- Cheap
- Easy to install
- Can be hidden under mulch
- Can deliver variable amounts of water to the right locations

The parts can be bought as needed and the system can be easily connected to a tap or reticulated system. Micro-systems also work well with tap timers.

Shrubs in well mulched soil can be watered every second day in the heat of summer and much less frequently in winter. Very tough and drought resistant shrubs can last a month without watering.

Remember to water in the early morning or evening, to minimise evaporation loss. Also, a long deep watering will ensure a good root system and reduce the likelihood of salts intruding on your shrubs.

Pruning

The more leaf area a plant has, the more water is lost. Pruning garden shrubs back after spring reduces the leaf area for summer, and thus reduces the shrub's water needs.

Care needs to be taken with pruning. Seek advice from your local nursery or gardening centre about appropriate pruning for your shrubs.



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



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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