

Successful Pot Plants Using Less Water



**WESTERN
WATER**



Our modern, busy lifestyle and the growing trend towards units and duplex living in Australia, means that pot plant gardening is becoming increasingly popular.

The good news is that pot plant gardening is very water efficient. The following simple secrets will help you to develop a successful pot plant garden and still conserve Australia's precious water resources.

Potting Mix

Healthy potted plants begin with the right potting mix. Your potting mix should have a high organic matter content which allows it to hold water and nutrients for your plant to use.

To get started, choose a good quality potting mix. (Some have been approved by Australian Standards and carry the relevant logo on the bag).

Soil Wetting Agents

Soil wetting agents are also very useful in overcoming a frequent problem of the soil getting so dry that it refuses to re-wet.

You can pour water on the surface and it just rolls off, or worse still, it appears to soak in but actually only enters at one spot and then runs straight out of the bottom, leaving the soil dry.

Pot plants need to be treated with wetting agents each year. The simplest method is to dunk them into a prepared solution of a soil wetting agent each spring.

Pot Style

Whilst unglazed terracotta pots are very fashionable, they have the disadvantage of being a porous material which allows soil moisture to escape comparatively quickly.

An unglazed terracotta pot should be made moisture proof before planting.

There are two ways to do this:

- Use a liquid sealant which is simply painted on to the inside of the pot.
- Line the inside of the pot with polythene. Make sure that a hole is cut in the polythene to coincide with the drainage hole of the pot.

Hydroponic systems are also water efficient. Though they may use a large liquid mass, the fluid is retained and recycled in the hydroponic process with very little waste.

Fertiliser

This is an important factor in successful pot plant gardening. Most gardeners apply too much fertiliser in the mistaken belief that a fast growing lush plant is a healthy plant.

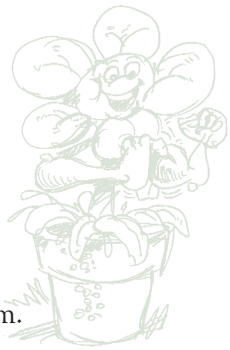
Forcing a plant to grow fast not only increases its water demand but causes it to be more susceptible to disease.

Regular use of such high nitrogen fertilisers often promotes leaf growth at the expense of flowers.

The best pot plants are those which are fed just enough to maintain their present size.

A potted garden is a thing of beauty

Look after it well and it will also be a joy forever, as well as being a very WaterWise way to garden



Pot Size

Make sure your pot is the right size. If it's too small, the plant will be restricted and stressed by lack of room.

If it's too large, your pot will take up more space and water than is necessary and be difficult to move around. Some plants, azaleas and fuchsias in particular, are prone to diseases like root rot if they are placed in too large a pot. Somewhere between the two extremes is the key.

Watering Requirements

To test whether a pot plant needs a drink or not, simply push your finger into the soil up to the first knuckle joint.

If the soil feels damp at that stage and sticks to your finger, the plant does not need a drink. Don't worry if your plants wilt a little during the heat of the day. Most plants can cope with this stress.

Ferns are the exception, as they are far more fussy and must never be allowed to dry out. Drippers are a good way to water pot plants, as they ensure that the water is distributed throughout the soil, rather than soaking through.

Mulch

Mulching of any of your garden is a great way to reduce water loss through evaporation.

When establishing pot plants, allow 50mm for mulch in your pot. As always, mulch should be kept clear of the stem to avoid possible fungal problems. In a pot, a 25-50mm clearance is fine.

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