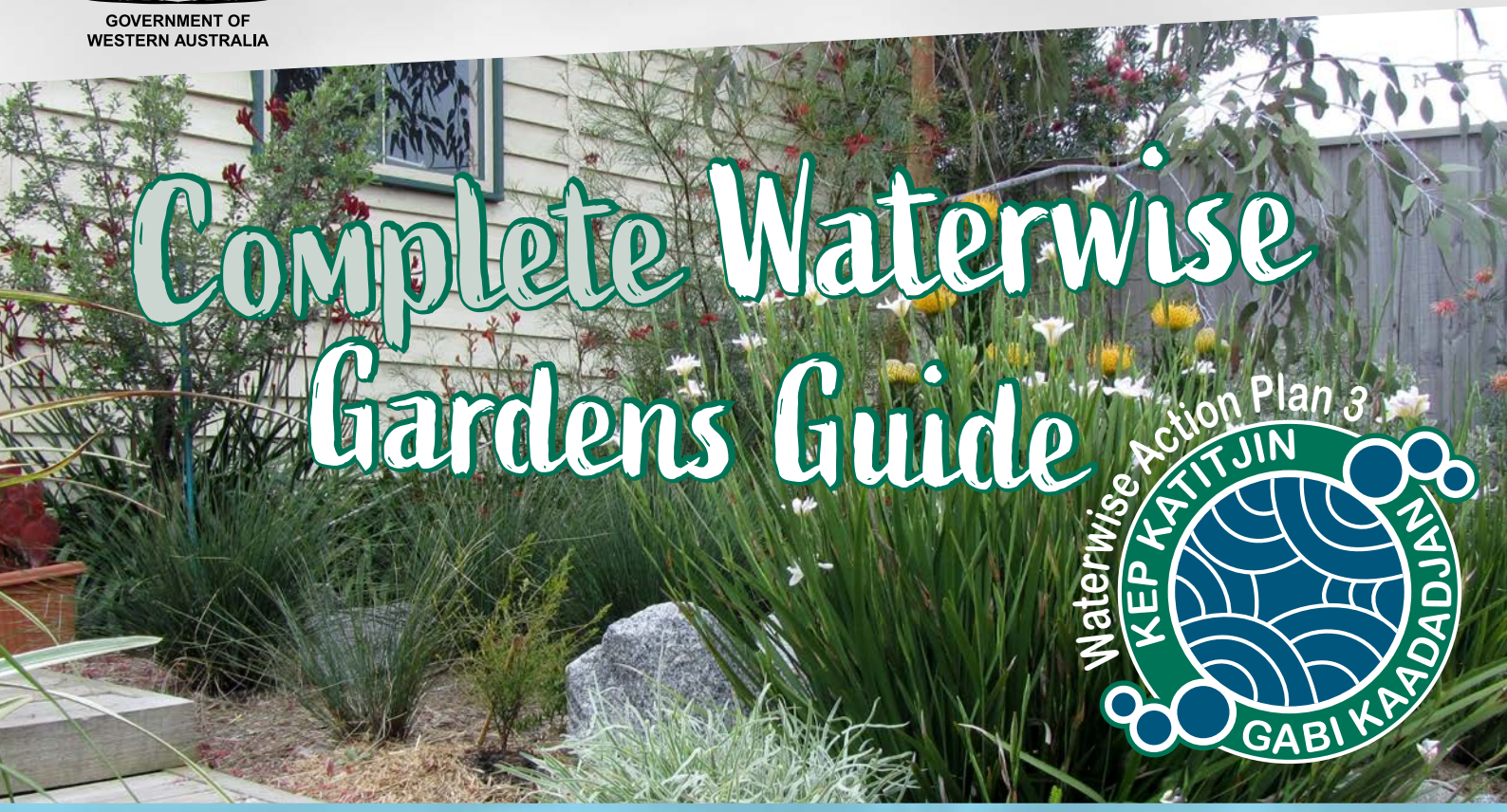
GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Complete Waterwise Gardens Guide

Waterwise Action Plan 3

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Perth's unique climate calls for a unique approach to gardening. Adapting the way we garden is essential to creating environments that are not only beautiful, but waterwise and resilient to our climate too.

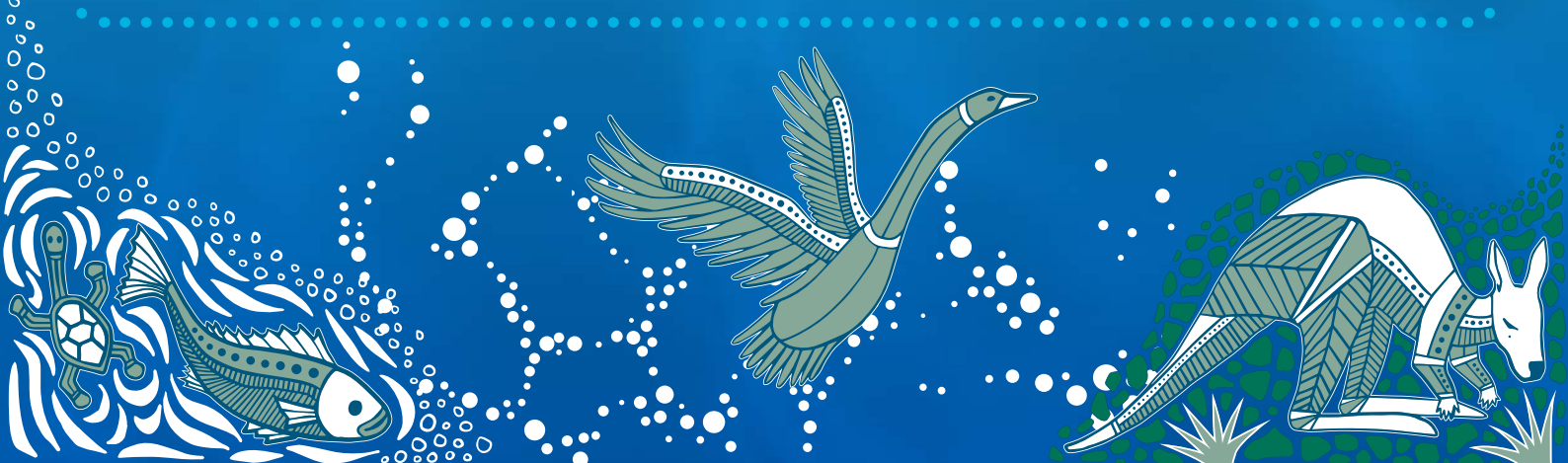
A waterwise garden is a living system that uses water efficiently to support soil, plants, and wildlife.

Over 30 per cent of household water is used for garden irrigation, so making sure your garden is waterwise can result in big water savings.

If you use a garden bore, please remember you are using precious groundwater, a limited resource that supports our wetlands, rivers, bushland, and trees. Bunuru (February – March) is the hottest, driest time of year, when groundwater use peaks and pressure on water resources is highest.

With less rainfall and hotter summers, every drop counts. Waterwise gardening keeps your garden thriving and helps secure WA's water future.

The following tips apply to both scheme (tap) water and garden bore water users.



1 Water smarter

When to water?

- Follow the two-days-per-week watering roster to help save water and keep our environment healthy. Check your watering days.
- Water before 9am or after 6pm on your rostered watering days. The cooler temperatures mean less evaporation.
- Comply with the Sprinkler Switch-off, which is mandatory for both scheme and bore water users, helping to save water for our drier months.
- Make the most of rainfall by directing runoff into garden beds.
- Refrain from turning on irrigation during spring if conditions are mild and there are regular rain events. If everyone in Perth left their sprinklers off in September, we would collectively save three billion litres of drinking water (equivalent to three Optus Stadiums full of water), which would help meet peak demand during summer.
- Adjust the amount of water you're putting on your garden as the seasons change. Gardens need less water in Djeran (April – May) and Kambarang (October – November) than throughout the hotter, drier months. Most irrigation controllers have a setting for seasonal adjustment.
- Switch off sprinklers when rain is forecast. Run your irrigation manually if it doesn't have a seasonal adjustment setting or use a weather-based irrigation controller.
- Water deeper, less often, to help plant establishment by encouraging roots to reach down for water, rather than encouraging shallow roots from lighter, more frequent watering.

How long to run sprinklers?

- Watering run times depend on your sprinkler type. Find the recommended run time for your sprinklers.
- Check that your run times are set up to supply an evenly distributed 10mm of water (less in cooler seasons) and ensure water is not being wasted by running sprinklers for too long by doing a catch cup test. Check the efficiency of your irrigation system.

What type of sprinklers are best?

- Choose the right type of sprinkler to save water. The most efficient sprinklers produce heavy water droplets. Some stream rotor sprinklers use up to 30 per cent less water than traditional spray sprinklers.
- Use drip irrigation in garden beds, which delivers water directly to the plant root zone for maximum efficiency. This not only minimises evaporation losses but also keeps foliage dry, reducing the risk of fungal problems taking hold.

Maintain your irrigation system and catch those leaks!

- Do maintenance checks while your irrigation system is running to make sure it is working efficiently. Look for leaks and sprinkler overcasting.
- Catch and fix leaks quickly to save significant amounts of water in the garden. Find out how to detect a leak. Across the year, around 30 per cent of households have a leak, including outdoor taps and irrigation systems. A leak wastes an average 20,000 litres of water.
- Check Water Corporation's Waterwise Offers for rebates and additional ways to help save water in the garden.

2 Improve soil health

Hydrozone

- Group plants with similar water needs together in your garden, which is known as hydrozoning. This ensures that plants receive the correct amount of water and helps prevent over-watering. It also creates different microclimates and encourages a vibrant, diverse and waterwise garden. Grouping plants with similar watering, sunlight and fertilising needs makes watering and garden management more efficient, providing better results.

- Healthy soil is the first step to a healthy garden that is resilient to our hot, dry summers. Improve your soil by applying soil conditioners such as compost and clay, if required.
- Sandy soils are often water repellent (hydrophobic). Add a wetting agent before planting a new garden or lawn, at the start of winter, in early summer and as recommended on the pack. This helps your soil retain water and nutrients and minimises runoff and water wastage.
- Mulch is like sunscreen for your garden. Applying a 5cm to 10cm layer of coarse mulch to your garden reduces soil temperatures, decreases water evaporation, adds organic matter to the soil and suppresses weeds. Ensure mulch is from an accredited supplier and is certified weed, pest and disease free.



3 Choose plants wisely

- Add local native and waterwise plants to your garden. Planting between May and August means that rainfall will help your plants establish before the hot weather arrives and your garden will be bursting with colour and life later in the year. Speak with your local waterwise garden centre or nursery to get the best advice on what plants are most suitable.
- Plant local natives, which require less water, fertilisers and pesticides. They are also attractive and will improve the biodiversity of your neighbourhood by providing habitat for wildlife.
- Retain existing trees and plant more where possible. There are many small trees suitable for smaller spaces and pots. Trees cool our gardens, homes, streets and neighbourhoods.
- Choose the right tree for the location. Choose waterwise trees that suit the size of the areas where they are to be planted.
- Create a verge garden and/or request a verge tree. Contact your local government for advice on requirements and available support. See further advice at creating a waterwise verge.
- Replace plants that are environmental weeds with local native plants, especially if you live near natural areas (bushland, wetlands, waterways or the coast).
- Rethink your lawn maintenance routine, or consider reducing or replacing lawn with local native garden beds or more water efficient lawn species.



4 Avoid infrastructure damage

- Take caution when digging in the garden or planting trees in proximity to buildings, fences and underground utilities, including working near Water Corporation assets. Damage to water, gas, electricity, telecommunications or other infrastructure can result in injury, disruption to services and costly repairs. Some activities within proximity of Water Corporation pipelines/structures (e.g. sewer pipes) will require application to Water Corporation for approval before works commence.
- Minimise the risk of damage by choosing trees with low invasive root systems and by planting a suitable distance away from pipes and other infrastructure. Tree roots seek out moisture and nutrients, so underground pipes can be an attractive source, which can lead to cracking, blockages and overflows.
- Use a root barrier, which is an underground shield or liner to block or redirect tree roots.
- Contact Before You Dig Australia (BYDA) (for utility service mains), obtain a Drainage Plumbing Diagram (for drainage plumbing layout within a property), or engage a skilled locating organisation to locate underground infrastructure.



5 Support wildlife and biodiversity

- Provide water for wildlife during the hotter months, including bird baths and small ponds. Make sure they are kept clean to prevent mosquitoes and the water is regularly topped up.
- Add habitats, such as insect hotels and bird, bat and possum boxes, to your garden to provide shelter and nesting areas for wildlife. A garden with logs, rockeries, thick mulch, dense shrubs and trees will provide additional habitat around the garden. Rewild your garden and bring nature home.
- Plant a garden full of different plant species, forms, textures and sizes, different bark and leaf types and colours, varied flower forms, colours and flowering times, followed by ornamental woody fruits to ensure year-round interest in the garden for you and for wildlife. Diversity is the key! This Biodiversity Score Card can help.



6 Protect water quality and river and wetland health

- Collect lawn clippings and leaves and compost them or put them in the FOGO bin. Keep them off the road and out of stormwater drains. Retaining some leaf litter in garden beds provides habitat for insects and lizards, whilst topping up mulch naturally.
- Only use fertiliser if and when required. Read the instructions on the pack when applying fertilisers or other treatments. Measure the target area and apply the right amount at the right time.
- Fertilise general garden and lawn areas sparingly in spring (Djilba and Kambarang) and autumn (Djeran). Use controlled-release granular fertilisers where possible and keep liquid fertilisers to a minimum.
- Protect our rivers and wetlands by not applying fertilisers and pesticides when heavy rain is forecast and don't apply near stormwater drains.



7 Manage pests and diseases



- Plant biodiverse gardens to minimise the need for pesticides.
- Refer to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) for the latest information regarding current pest and disease activity.
- Limit the spread of Polyphagous shot-hole borer. Do not move wood, green waste, mulch, live plants and plant material outside of the Management Zone to the Containment Zone or to outside the Perth metropolitan Quarantine Area.
- Sign up then download the MyPestGuide® Reporter app to report pests! You'll be helping to keep your garden healthy, support local growers, protect the environment and keep WA's economy thriving.

8 Create a positive impact in your neighbourhood

- Join a local community conservation group. Find a conservation group near you.
- Attend a free RiverWise and/or Waterwise Gardening workshop.
- Contact your local government to find out about waterwise and environmental projects and programs happening in your community (such as tree planting days).



Useful links and resources

Be Groundwater Wise - Waterwise gardens, lawns and verges

Waterwise Plants, Drought Tolerant Plants - Water Corporation

Western Australian Plants | Kings Park

Fertilise Wise and Grow Local Plants – SERCUL

Bring Nature Home - ReWild Perth

Nature at Home | NatureLink Perth

Swan Canning Riverpark | Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

River Guardians

Waterwise garden centres and nurseries

Check in with your local government for plant species, requirements and resources (e.g. local native plant sales and subsidies).

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Department of **Water and Environmental Regulation**

Department of **Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**

WATER CORPORATION

BOTANIC GARDENS & PARKS AUTHORITY

Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

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