

MITREPLAN PROJECT PLANNER

Create a dry tolerant garden



- An easy-to-follow guide to achieving a perfect result.
- Outlines all the tools you will need for the job.

PLEASE NOTE:

Before starting this project or buying any materials, it is worth your time to read all steps thoroughly first to be sure you understand what is required.

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Step 3: Plant Choice

You have drawn up a plan, prepared the soil, updated your irrigation system and considered for mulch. It is now time for the really fun stuff—choosing plants!

Selecting a garden style when planning can deliver conformity and structure in its final visual effect. Many home gardens are a hybrid of different styles. Once again, the most important thing is to group plants together according to the drop rating.

Some Possible Garden Styles

Mediterranean gardens are perfectly suited to many regions of Australia and plants from this category love hot, dry summers. Some of the best 'one drop' plants for a Mediterranean garden include:

Trees

Crepe Myrtle, European Fan Palms, Olive Tree, Wattle, Various Citrus trees, Pencil Pine, Various Conifers and Evergreen Ash.

Shrubs, perennials and ground covers

Ceanothus, Oleander, Plumbago, Pomegranate, Rosemary, Wormwood, Indian Hawthorn, Coprosma species, Viburnum species, Native Rosemary, Yuccas, Coreopsis species, Gazania, Geranium, Lavender, Liriope species, New Zealand Flax, Rosemary, Scaevola species, Succulents, Agave, Butterfly Bush, Cat Mint, Seaside Daisy, Kalanchoe, Rock Rose and Wormwood.

Climbers

Bougainvillea species, Native Wisteria, Ornamental and fruiting grapes, Pandorea species and Potato creeper.

Native gardens are often low maintenance and are obviously perfectly suited to our environment while at the same time supporting the existence and introduction of wildlife into the garden. With native plants, it is possible to create a garden which will offer colour all year round and grow with very little additional water. It is important to remember that native plant terminology refers to plants from Australia which has many different climatic conditions and soil types. If you're looking for truly water-efficient species that require no supplementary water once established then seek out local or endemic plant species that originate from your local area. Some of the best 'one drop' plants for a native garden include:

Trees

Banksia species, Gum Trees, Kurrajongs, Native Frangipani, Blueberry Ash, Bottlebrush, Wattles and Paperbarks.

Shrubs, perennials and ground covers

Lily Pily, Native Hibiscus, Native Rosemary, Thryptomene species, Wattles, Wax Flower, Tea-Trees, Grevillea species, Woolly Bush, Crowea species, Cushion Bush, Fringed Lily, Kangaroo Paw, Native Fuchsia, Pimelea species, Dampiera species, Dianella species, Lomandra species, Scaevola species and Strawflowers.

Climbers

Hardenbergia species, Golden Snake Vine, Native Wisteria, Wonga Wonga Vine and Kennedia species.

Cottage gardens are typically associated with cooler European climates in which rainfalls are regular and often heavy. Fortunately, it is still possible to have a garden with all of the benefits of a cottage garden without needing the additional water. Some of the best 'one drop' plants for a native garden include:

Trees

Crepe Myrtle and Judas tree.

Shrubs, perennials and ground covers

Ceanothus species, Cotoneaster, Plumbago, Wax Flower, Butterfly Bush, Cape Daisy, Cat Mint, Evening Primrose, Fringed Lily, Gazania, Kangaroo Paw, Lavender, African Daisy, Agapanthus, Dietes species, Geranium, Marguerite Daisy and Correa species.

Climbers

Sollya species and Pandorea species.

Tropical gardens look lush, leafy and conjure up images of holidays on tropical islands. Such a vision is quite easy to recreate in your own garden using water-efficient plants. Densely-planted garden beds help ensure the tropical look and water efficiency. Some of the best 'one drop' plants for a native garden include:

Shrubs, perennials and ground covers

Lily Pily, Coprosma species, Cordyline species, Plumbago, Cycad, New Zealand Flax, Bromeliad, Mother-in-Laws Tongue, Bird-of-Paradise, Dietes species and Kaffir Lily.

Climbers

Pandorea species and Bougainvillea species.

Modern minimalist gardens are very basic in structure; they tend to use only a few plants in mass. They have become very popular as they suit the modern Australian home's architecture. It is very easy to create watering zones in minimalist gardens as plants are generally grouped together in mass. Some of the best 'one drop' plants for a modern minimalist garden include:

Create a dry tolerant garden – with a little help from Mitre 10.

Being a waterwise gardener has become a necessity for most Australian homeowners. Climate change and reduced water stocks have made it necessary for all Australians to carefully consider how they plan their gardens. Despite the challenges associated with these issues, it is still possible to have the garden style and plants you want whilst using very little water.

Planning is the key to success and carefully considering the plants you use is imperative.

Fortunately in Australia, there is a huge range of plants, both indigenous to your part of this large country or from other regions of the world, which are appropriate for our climate and water-efficient. This huge array of plants can be used to create a dry tolerant garden in any style, from Australian native to Mediterranean to cottage to modern minimalist or a mixture of any of the themes.

Water-efficient plants are plants which not only use small amounts of water but also have particular skills which enable them to use the water they receive more effectively. Some plants like succulents store huge amounts of water in their leaves; others like cerastiums have silver foliage which reflects the heat of the sun.

If you are planning a new garden or revamping an old one, dry tolerant plants will be your number one priority. Coupled with other waterwise practices like mulching, efficient irrigation and good plant care, you can create a garden oasis without impacting your local water supply.

3 Steps to Success

Step 1: Planning

As with any garden, the planning process is possibly the most important thing you will do. Take time to make a list of features you would like including edible gardens, lawn areas, flower beds, screening plants, children's play areas and outdoor entertaining areas.

Aspect

It is really important to understand the aspect of your garden. Investigate where the sun rises and sets, which areas receive the most amount of sun, which areas are shaded for periods of the day and which areas are subject to strong winds. All of these elements will help to determine the best plants for certain areas.

Understanding where the sun rises and sets is a really important piece of knowledge to retain. Morning sun tends to be less harsh than afternoon sun and therefore plants can be chosen accordingly. The sun is also higher in the summer than it is in the winter. This creates different shaded areas and will mean some areas of your garden will be in the sun in the summer and not in the winter. When investigating your garden's aspect, it is important to consider the season, as what you see today will be a little different in three months time and a little different again in six months time.



Protection and Shelter

Once you know the hot spots in your garden, it is time to consider ways in which you could cool it more effectively. This can be easily achieved by choosing plants that will offer protection from winds, cover entertaining areas and offer shade during the summer.

Protecting your garden from the wind can be one of the best practices you can put in place to ensure water efficiency. Wind can cause evaporation loss from your soil and your plant's leaves. Wherever possible and practical, try to protect your garden by planting hedges and screening plants.

The range of great water-efficient screening plants are vast and varied. In cooler climates, Pittosporum, Viburnum and Conifers are fantastic; where as in warmer climates, Grevillea, Native Rosemary, Bottlebrush, Lily Pily, Olive and New Zealand Christmas tree are ideal.

Trees are also a perfect way to offer your garden some relief from the hot summer sun. Deciduous trees are particularly good as they shade your garden in the summer but allow light through in the winter. The correct placement of trees can ensure the majority of your garden is given some relief from the sun through different parts of the day.

Some great drought-hardy deciduous trees include Gleditsia, Crepe Myrtle, Golden Rain tree, Ash, Ornamental Pear and Chinese Elm. Many of the trees are available in different foliage colours, shapes and sizes.

Climbing plants sprawling over patios, pergolas and other outdoor areas can also help to offer relief from the sun for people and other plants. Water-efficient climbers like Bougainvillea, Sollya, Hibbertia, Hardenbergia and Pandorea look great and are very hardy.

Watering Zones

Once you have determined the aspect of your garden, you can identify areas where you can plant trees and screening plants to offer additional protection.

The next step is to determine what the purpose of each area of the garden is going to be used for; this is so that you can divide your garden up into watering zones. Which areas you would like to use for recreation and which areas will be used for show.

Watering zones can be broken up into three main categories: 'one drop' (lowest water use), 'two drops' and 'three drops'.

'One drop' plants are plants which once established should not be watered any more than once a week in typical summer conditions, in most cases they will survive for much longer.

'Two drops' plants will usually require a deep watering once a week once established. 'Three drops' plants will usually require water twice a week, even once established.

When planning watering zones in your garden, you should aim to have as many plants from the 'one drop' list as possible and keep the others to a minimum.

As a general rule, the best way to set out your watering zones is to have any 'three drops' plants as close to the home as possible and use 'one drop' plants around the outside.

The front garden's prime purpose is to look attractive and to complement the home. Therefore planting hardy 'one drop' plants at the front of your property makes perfect sense. 'One drop' plants will survive with very little attention so you can be assured your front garden is always looking good and not wilting under the pressure of summer.

'Two drops' plants can be used in the most frequented areas of the garden and include lawn areas. When placing lawn in your garden, consider how the areas are to be used.

In many cases, gardens have more area dedicated to lawn than needed. If you need a good-sized lawn area, make sure you are using hardy varieties. A smaller well-maintained lawn area will look much better than a large un-kept area.

Some of the more popular garden plants come into the 'two drops' category and if you group these plants together, mulch well and protect from strong winds, they will be fine. Where possible, try to limit the number of 'two drops' garden beds to only a few and have them in a position of the garden where you can enjoy them. This also means you can monitor the plants easily.

'Three drops' plants will be plants like vegetables which will require additional water during some times of the year. Mulch these areas heavily and place them close to taps where you can top up individual plants with a watering can when needed.

A number of 'three drops' plants may be better suited to pots with good potting mix and soil wetter. Keeping the plants in pots will mean you can easily move the plants around and place them in protected positions throughout the year.

Grouping 'three drops' plants together is imperative as it is important you only apply extra water to plants that really need it.

Even in your veggie garden, it is important to keep plants in zones as many herbs fall into the 'two drops' or even 'one drop' category and other vegetables will be 'two drops' plants when growing and become 'three drops' plants when they start to mature before harvest.

Step 2: Preparation

Soil Improvement

Soil improvement is one of the major steps to creating a successful waterwise garden regardless of the style or the plant choices. Local native species can be started without additions to the natural soils. When planting out exotic species, adding a composted soil improver into the planting hole will greatly benefit the establishment and growth of the plant.

It is important to use a premium-quality soil improver and the Australian Standards 5-tick red standard mark identifies the premium-quality blend. Where the soil is heavy and composed mainly of clay, it is a good idea to mound up the planting area or raise the level of garden beds. In sandy, free-draining soils, aim to build up a ridge of soil around the planting area to encourage water to drain into the centre.

The open free-draining nature of the soil improver mixed at a 50/50 ratio with the garden soil type will encourage rapid establishment of a deeper root system using less water.

Watering Systems

It's important a watering system is designed to deliver water in the required volumes for specific needs. Technology continually improves in the development of direct delivery irrigation systems, and such systems are now readily available, cost effective and easy to install.

The best watering system for lawns is a sub-surface irrigation system that delivers water direct to the lawn's root system. These systems are placed under the turf before it is laid or can be cut into the surface of existing lawn areas.



If you are to use pop-up sprinklers in your lawn area, strongly consider using stream-thrown, low-volume sprinklers. Two main types are readily available: gear-driven irrigators, which send out a single stream up to 6m long and streaming sprinklers, which work by directing fingers of water that rotate in unison and cover a 2m to 9m radius. As a result of throwing water in streams rather than

fine droplets, these are less likely to be affected by windy conditions.

The most effective garden bed watering applicators are dribblers, drippers and sub-surface inline watering systems. These soak the soil in a teardrop pattern which encourages roots to follow the water down deeply into the soil, reducing the chances of the plant becoming water stressed when the top soil dries on the hotter days. Such systems are easily adapted to both new and existing gardens.



Mulching

Mulching will take place after planting but is worth considering at this point. A 100mm to 150mm thick layer of mulch should be placed evenly all over your garden beds after planting. Mulch should be kept away from the plant's stems, which encourages a bowling effect encouraging water to flow towards the plant, not away from it.

There are many different types of mulches available. Within densely planted garden beds, it is better to use a composted organic product.



Trees

Bangalow Palm, Crepe Myrtle, Olive Tree, Gleditsia, Ornamental Pear, Pencil Pine and New Zealand Cabbage Palm.

Shrubs, perennials and ground covers

Bird-of-Paradise, Mother-in-Laws Tongue, New Zealand Flax, Cycad, Lily Pily, Dietes species, Agave, Kalanchoe, Liriope species and Succulents.

Climbers

Pandorea species, Chinese Star Jasmine and Bougainvillea species.

Mixed-styled gardens are a popular garden choice for many people. A minimalist garden out of the front of the house might be perfect to complement the home but a tropical garden near the entertaining area out the back might suit the homeowner's lifestyle. Using the basic principles of certain garden styles can be good for gardeners who just want their garden to be functional, attractive and water efficient. For those who want to add their own touch of flair and creativity to their garden, the opportunities are endless. The most important thing is to consider the water efficiency of your plant choices.

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