

What does creating a water-wise garden mean? It means as a gardener, you need to respect and understand the value of water. It means recognising the need to conserve it by using it wisely and responsibly at all times.

Compost is a valuable component to soil preparation as it improves the soil's capacity to hold and retain water.

As water-wise gardeners, we need to create gardens that are not only sustainable but also able to withstand the challenges that come with the different seasons.

The three main pillars to successfully creating a water-friendly garden are soil preparation, selection of plants and mulching.

Deborah Hele from [GardenShop](#) shares some water-wise gardening tips...

1. Soil preparation

The first thing that gardeners need to do is invest in the soil.

Spend time enriching it with compost. By composting you return the nutrients that were taken from the soil. Furthermore, the compost will greatly reduce your dependence on chemicals like artificial fertilisers and pesticides.



The Cape-forget-me-not shrub is easy to grow and its flowers attract birds.

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2. Selection of plants

There are a wealth of plants that are suited for water-wise (low water use) gardens. Before you get down to the hard work, carefully select and group plants according to their water needs.

- Drought tolerant plants

Dymondia margaretae or silver carpet is a compact, neat, ground hugging plant with small yellow daisy-like flowers. It is perfect for those tight areas in between stepping stones and sunny courtyards.

Clivia miniata which is also known as the bush lily is a magnificent trumpet-shaped flower. It comes in red, orange, yellow or cream coloured petals that flower in spring. Make sure to plant these in shaded areas.



Varieties of Hemerocallis or daylilies come in a number of colours including yellow, orange, maroon, pink, purple and red.

The Phormium or New Zealand flax is ideal if you're looking to create linear architectural lines in gardens and containers. The Gaura lindheimeri or butterfly bush has showy white and pink flowers that attract beneficial birds and bees.

- Low water use plant choices

Varieties of Hemerocallis or daylilies come in a number of colours including yellow, orange, maroon, pink, purple and red. They can be used as a decorative border along a path or driveway and they are suitable for growing in containers.

Nothing is as delightful as planting the Plumbago, which is also known as the Cape-forget-me-not shrub. Not only does it grow easily but its flowers are also a massive attraction for birds.

Lavender varieties have an incredible fragrance and beautiful flowers that attract beneficial insects, bees and butterflies.

Mulching is an important garden management technique that homeowners can use if they're looking to transform their gardens into water-wise outdoor areas.

- Medium water-wise plant options

Part of the Cape floral kingdom, the rich reed-like Chondropetalum tectorum or Cape reed is a stylish and elegant plant with graceful foliage.

Homeowners can also plant Osteospermums or African daisies for their showy array of flowers, dazzling purples, whites and yellows which attract a host of butterflies.

Carex or sedge grass is a dense forming low-growing ornamental grass that's ideal for mass planting. Plant it in full sun to take advantage of the contrasting foliage.

3. Mulch

Mulching is an important garden management technique that homeowners can use if they're looking to transform their gardens into water-wise outdoor areas.

Not only will it stabilise the soil temperature and retain moisture in the summer, but mulching your garden also protects the plants roots from cold weather. Mulches also help prevent weeds from growing.

Mulching is suitable for all areas of the garden and comes in different forms. Most popular of these include the biodegradable mulches such as grass clippings, sawdust, bark chips, well-rotted manure and garden compost.

Enjoy the transition of gardening wisely and sustainably. Share your water-wise gardening knowledge freely so that the coming generations can also pass down this information.

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