

GARDENS & GROUNDS

Maintaining gardens and grounds for the enjoyment of your guests can be costly, time consuming and resource intensive - but it doesn't have to be. The following suggestions should help your business to minimise water consumption outdoors, use garden materials productively and reduce costs.

Reducing Water use on Lawns and Gardens

By applying a range of simple techniques such as those detailed below, your business has the opportunity to decrease outdoor water consumption by up to 50 per cent as well as reducing costs and the work load required to keep your grounds looking attractive.

Planning and Planting

- When planning your garden, select native shrubs and other plants which are well adapted to the climate in the area and therefore don't require much additional watering. Your local nursery should be able to assist by recommending suitable indigenous plants.
- Minimise lawn areas through creative landscaping. Lawns need more water per square metre than any other area of garden, so minimising the area of lawn you plant will reduce your overall water consumption.
- Select and plant water efficient lawn species. Ask your local nursery for advice.

Watering Systems and Practices

- Don't forget that permanent water restrictions prohibit daytime watering in Melbourne! In regional areas, schedule watering to avoid the heat of the day to minimise losses from evaporation. Water plants during the cooler times such as early morning or late evening to ensure that plants get the full benefit of the water.

Permanent & Temporary Water Restrictions

The Victorian Government has put in place a system of temporary and permanent water restrictions to ensure the sustainability of water supplies throughout the state. Temporary water restrictions are staged on a scale of 1-4 on a regional basis and are put in place according to need. For up to date information on permanent and temporary water restrictions [contact your local water authority](#)

In addition to the above, Victoria has a series of Permanent Water Saving Rules as a long term water conservation initiative. The five rules are:

1. Use manual watering systems only between 8pm and 10am
2. Use automatic watering systems only between 10pm and 10am
3. Fit hoses with a trigger nozzle
4. No hosing of paved areas
5. Apply to fill a pool – a water savings plan must be submitted to your water retailer

- Don't water when it is raining. This sounds absurdly obvious but it is easy to forget to switch off timer-based automatic systems.

- Frequent watering can make plants shallow rooted and therefore more dependent on continued frequent watering for survival. How often you should water depends on the water restrictions, climate, plant and soil type. Get some advice from your nursery or irrigation supplier.
- If using hoses and sprinklers, consider using a tap timer to prevent over-watering. Forgetting about just one sprinkler can waste over 1,000 litres of water each hour.
- Consider installing an automatic irrigation system to improve efficiency of water use and save time. One of the keys is to 'zone' the irrigation system to match watering to plants' needs. In particular, make sure gardens and lawns are watered separately. To get the best results it's wise to get professional advice when planning the system.
- Undertake a routine maintenance program to check for leaks
- Sweep 'hard' areas instead of hosing them. Hosing uses more than 1,000 litres of water per hour.

Collecting Rainwater

The collection and use of rainwater offers the opportunity for a win-win situation for both the environment and community by contributing to reduction in mains water demand and reducing environmental impacts. Rainwater is best suited for use where drinking water standards are not required, such as toilet flushing and garden irrigation, but can also be used for showering and drinking where monitored for health standards.

All-in-one systems for rainwater collection which include the tank, pump and controller are widely available through building and plumbing suppliers. Tanks come in all shapes, sizes and materials including:



- above-ground polyurethane, fibre reinforced or corrugated iron
- plastic or concrete which can be buried underground
- 'bladder' type tanks which can be concealed under decks or sub floors
- tanks built into walls or fencing

Utilising Greywater

Greywater (all non-toilet household wastewater) can be a good water resource during times of drought and water restrictions, but its reuse can carry health and environmental risks. Greywater systems fall into two categories:

- Simple 'diversion' devices which temporarily store water (typically for less than a day) and then release it without treatment, usually to gardens for subsurface irrigation
- Greywater treatment systems which incorporate physical and biological treatment to improve water quality before discharge.

For more information refer to the section on [Greywater](#)

Making the Most of Green Waste

Large volumes of garden materials such as trimmings, prunings and lawn clippings can be produced from even relatively small gardens. These materials should be regarded as a resource and can be reprocessed on-site into useful materials, rather than being disposed of to landfill.

- Chip tree branches and other woody material. Spreading mulch on gardens can reduce water losses from evaporation by up to 70%. Use a contractor if it is not cost effective to purchase your own chipper.

- Set up a compost heap or worm farm and produce a valuable soil conditioner. In addition to garden trimmings and prunings, you can add other materials such as paper and cardboard and most kitchen food scraps. Additional benefits from setting up a composting facility include reduced demand for other fertilisers and reduced waste cartage costs. Contact [Sustainability Victoria](#) for more information.
- Locate plants that require more water in areas which are naturally damp, such as hollows or areas adjacent to pavement, septic absorption trenches or overflows. This will reduce the amount of extra water which needs to be supplied to these plants, and will help to overcome dampness.

Fertilisers

The following actions will help you reduce the cost and environmental impact of fertiliser use:

- Apply chemical fertiliser only when necessary to provide nutrients. Over-use will stimulate excessive growth and increase water requirements, leading to greater cost, material use and garden maintenance. Ask your nursery supplier for recommended application rates.
- Time fertiliser application to avoid runoff from lawns and gardens; check the weather forecast and don't over water. Nutrient run-off can affect ecosystems throughout the catchment, beyond the boundaries of your property.
- Preferentially apply compost or worm castings produced on-site to avoid importing more nutrients.