

TAPPED IN

Bringing you news, updates and information from Watercare



Emma Bodley, botanical records and conservation officer at the Auckland Botanic Gardens. Annuals like this flower, Papaver nudicaule 'Wonderland Mix', love water, so the Botanic Gardens has reduced the number of annual beds to only one area around the visitor centre to decrease watering requirements.

Best-fit botany works for home gardens, too

With 64 hectares of gardens to care for, it is no surprise the Auckland Botanic Gardens at Manurewa has taken a sustainable approach to water management.

“We try to incorporate water-sensitive design as much as possible,” explains Emma Bodley, botanical records and conservation officer.

There are many aspects of this waterwise approach that are simple to apply to household gardens. The easiest thing you can do, however, is to take note of the climate and conditions of your garden and choose plants that are a good fit.

“Often gardeners think if plants die it’s their fault but a lot of the time they’re just using the wrong plants for the climate here,” Emma says. All of the 10,000-plus plants at the Botanic Gardens have had to prove that they can survive in Auckland’s climate.

“Apart from the nursery, most of the gardens here don’t have an irrigation system, so we have to

use plants that are suitable for the climate and garden,” she explains. “New Zealand native plants are fantastic options for home gardens because they have adapted well to our climate over time and don’t need much pampering or extra watering. They also add interesting texture and colour and look good in all seasons.”

There are many other plants that don’t need a great deal of watering and still look great over summer – you just need to choose ones that work with your garden’s soil type, drainage situation, and the amount of sun, wind and rain it receives.

“It’s also important to plant at the correct time of year – autumn for trees and shrubs, and spring for perennials,” Emma adds. “This will ensure that plants can cope with minimal water during summer.”

Staff at the Botanic Gardens are always happy to talk about suitable plants, and your local garden centre is also a great place to go if you need advice.

“New Zealand native plants are fantastic options for home gardens because they have adapted well to our climate over time and don’t need much pampering or extra watering.”

Creating a water-efficient garden

Spring is time to get back into the garden – the temperature is rising and things are bursting back into life.

Whether you're planning a big garden or some potted plants on a window sill, making smart choices when selecting your plants, and their placement and watering techniques means you can create a garden that thrives in dry weather. And, of course, a waterwise garden will have a positive effect on your water bill. Below, we've included some simple tips you can use to reduce your garden's water requirements.

Plant wisely

Many things influence your garden's water requirements, but an easy way to help reduce the amount of water needed is choice of plants. Your local garden centre can help you select the right plants for your garden, as well as advise you of the best time to plant them. For example, you should make sure to plant vegetables well before the summer heat, so they can establish a deep root system to access moisture deep down in the soil. Tomatoes and squash are especially quick at growing such roots.

If you have bare patches of lawn, spring is the time to re-seed. Consider drought-resistant lawn seed mixes that contain varieties of perennial ryegrass and fescues.



TURF PERENNIAL RYEGRASS



FESCUE



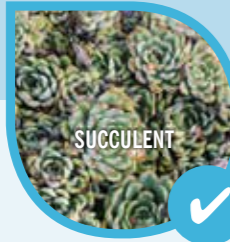
DORMANT LAWN

Be aware that some varieties of grass are actually designed to dry out and go yellow in summer – they will recover in autumn. It is also better to let your grass grow a little longer in the summer. It will stay greener than a closely-mown lawn and need less watering over dry periods as it strengthens the root system and shades the root zone.

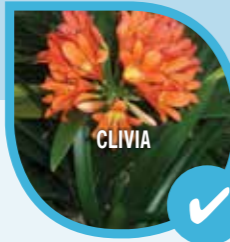
Plants that do well in dry conditions



SALVIA



SUCCULENT



CLIVIA



LIBERTIA



ARTHROPODIUM



Make good use of rainwater

Collecting rainwater is a great way to irrigate your garden and reduce your water use at the same time. A barrel or a small tank can be installed easily – you can learn how to do this from workshops organised by environment trusts. No consent is required if you are installing a rainwater tank for outdoor water use only, provided that it meets the guidelines for size and support above ground. Tanks larger than 6,000 litres may require a resource consent. You can find out more from Auckland Council.

Watering techniques

It's a good idea to think about how you're going to water your garden. Grouping plants with similar watering needs together in one area will make watering more efficient and ensure they all receive the correct amount of water. Watering the base of a plant rather than the leaves means the water is much more likely to reach the roots, where it will be of most benefit. Water your garden in the early morning or evening to minimise the volume of water lost through evaporation. It's more water-efficient to give plants a good soaking every few days rather than a quick shower every day.



If you haven't already, consider setting up a drip irrigation system. This is a very water-efficient way to get water deep down to plants' roots.



Did you know a running hose can use up to 400 litres of water per hour? Fitting a trigger nozzle or a watering wand to your hose allows you to direct the spray to where it needs to go – the base of plants – as well as to control the flow of water. You can use short, sharp bursts, turning off the flow as you move between plants to reduce the amount of water used.



Similarly, a watering can is another water-efficient way to water your garden. You can direct the flow where it is needed, and stop watering as you move around the garden.



Wheat or pea-straw, as well as bark or grass clippings can be used as mulch.



Place mulch around your plants

This will help to minimise the volume of water lost through evaporation once warmer weather begins to dry things up. A few centimetres of mulch increases water penetration, improves soil fertility and structure, reduces weed growth and protects soil against evaporation and erosion. Make sure you don't place mulch too close to your plants' stems, however, as it can cause them to rot.

How much does it cost to water my garden?

Running your garden hose for an hour uses up to 400 litres and costs around...



While this cost is made up of both water and wastewater charges, we make allowances for outdoor water use.

Put simply, for every 100 litres of water that enters your property, we only charge you for 78.5 litres of wastewater. This allows 21.5 litres for activities such as washing your car, filling your kettle and watering your garden.

This applies year-round, even during the cooler months when you are unlikely to be in the garden or cooling off the kids with the hose.

Remember to check for leaks outside, too



Check your garden taps, hoses and irrigation system for drips and leaks – if your garden tap drips once every second, it can waste up to 33 litres of water per day! For more information on how to check for leaks, visit www.watercare.co.nz and search for 'leaks'.



Factors influencing the need for water in the garden

The amount of water you will need to keep your garden going through summer depends on many factors, including:

SOIL TYPE: clay soils absorb water slowly but are prone to compaction. Sandy soils do not retain water well but are easier to work.

PLANT VARIETY: some plants require a very high volume of water to stay healthy and looking good. Visit your local garden centre for more information on waterwise plants.

ORGANIC CONTENT OF THE SOIL: the more compost and organic content in the soil, the better it will be at retaining moisture and the less watering it will need.

AND... drainage, slope, shade, wind and rainfall amount and frequency.

Need help with your water use?

We provide a free, personalised water advice and audit service to households in Auckland. Contact us on (09) 442 2222 or email info@water.co.nz to sign up.



Maintenance servicemen Rick Yu (left) and Jim Burkhardt remove rags and wipes that were preventing a pump from pushing wastewater through the network.

Job hunting? We're recruiting

We're currently recruiting people to join our teams that maintain and repair Auckland's water and wastewater networks.

When you report a water leak or wastewater overflow, it is assigned to a maintenance services field crew to fix.

"Each day is different, and that's what I find the most interesting," says Dave Herbert, one of our wastewater supervisors. "The job requires a fair amount of detective work. We get on site and then we work out what has happened – and how to fix it."

Our crews are out on the scene when there is an issue and work closely with affected customers to resolve any problems quickly and efficiently. Getting out there and talking to customers is a part of the job that Dave finds especially rewarding.

"Until there's a problem with your water, you don't think about it. That's why we feel like we really make a difference when we can fix an issue for someone."

Some crews are responsible for maintaining the water network. They undertake a range of

jobs, from the relatively small, such as fixing a leaky water meter or investigating leaks in the network, through to big jobs like repairing a burst water main. Other crews are responsible for maintaining the wastewater network, and they carry out work such as flushing pipes to prevent blockages, and repairing broken pipes and pump stations.

As well as attending customer jobs and emergency call-outs, our field crews routinely carry out preventative work to keep the water and wastewater networks flowing.

Dave says work like flushing pipes is essential.

"Things going down the wrong pipes, such as baby wipes, can really cause problems in our pump stations, so we try and prevent blockages as much as possible."

A career with our maintenance services field crews offers you hands-on, interesting work and ongoing training and development. If you enjoy solving problems, thinking on your feet and interacting with a wide range of people, visit www.watercare.co.nz and search for 'vacancies' to find out more.

Watch Robert Sadgrove, one of our maintenance services field crew, in action – visit www.watercare.co.nz and search for 'Day in the life: Robert Sadgrove'.



Xero customers

You can pay your water bill through your Xero account. Visit www.watercare.co.nz and search for 'ways to pay' to find out how.

Our customer contract

Recently we let you know about changes to our customer contract. This is available to view online at www.watercare.co.nz (search for 'customer contract') or you can phone us on (09) 442 2222 to request a copy.

A colourful reminder about clean waterways

The next time you go past Harold Moody Reserve in Glen Eden make sure to check out the colourful collection of sea creatures that has moved in.

As part of our wastewater network upgrade in the area, we asked the budding artists at Glen Eden Primary School what their local waterways mean to them. The outcome was 'cleaning up your waterways', which ties in well with the objective of our current works and highlights the important role wastewater infrastructure plays in ensuring healthy beaches and waterways.

The Glen Eden upgrade, which involves a new storage tank and pipeline, will clean up local waterways by reducing overflows in wet-weather conditions.

For updates on the construction and how it may affect you, visit 'work in your area' at www.watercare.co.nz.



Artwork by Remona Lino Malo, from Glen Eden Primary School.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Tapped In is your newsletter. If you would like to talk to us about any stories from this edition or your ideas for future issues, we'd love to hear from you. To get in touch, please phone our communications team on (09) 442 2222 or email info@water.co.nz. You can learn more about what we do at www.watercare.co.nz.