

How can you conserve water in your own garden?

Decide what areas or plants actually need additional watering.

Many plants will survive on the water supplied by natural rainfall. For example, locally-native species are adapted to the weather conditions in your area. Many plant species from arid and Mediterranean climates can also survive for long periods without rain or supplementary irrigation.

Irrigate your plants according to weather conditions.

How often you water your plants will need to be adjusted from week to week. Depending on rainfall, no irrigation will normally be needed for established plantings in winter compared to typically once every 7-14 days in summer. Regularly adjust timers and controllers to ensure the right amount of water is applied at the right time.

Group together plants with similar water requirements.

Some plants need more water than others. By grouping plants with similar water requirements, you can help to prevent over- or under-watering individual plants. It can also simplify the design and operation of a watering system.

Choose plants with adaptations that make them natural water savers.

In general, plants with hairy, succulent, wax-coated leaves or with fine, stiff foliage are adapted to growing in dry environments. Grey-or silver-foliaged plants are also usually suited to dry conditions.

Apply a layer of mulch annually to help minimise water-loss from the soil.

Mulch improves the long-term water-holding capacity of the soil and also restricts weed growth that may compete with plants for water. It should be applied in layers from 50-75mm maximum thickness. Mulch that is too thick or too fine will prevent rainfall and irrigation from reaching the soil.

Consider replacing part or all of a lawn with a woody groundcover or change to selected *warm-season grasses or a local native grassland.

Cool-season grasses such as Ryegrass usually need regular watering. *Warm-season grasses such as Buffalo, Couch or Kikuyu use water more efficiently (up to 30% less) and more readily tolerate drought. Local native grasses are adapted to seasonally dry weather

Some warm-season grasses can be environmental weeds and invade natural habitats. Please check if this will be a problem for your local area with horticultural experts or local government prior to planting any of these species in your situation.