

Waterwise verge guide

The City of Mandurah encourages soft landscape verge treatments, including waterwise plants and mulch.

We encourage the establishment of waterwise unirrigated verges as the best approach to saving water. When designed, installed and well maintained waterwise verge gardens can:

- Save water in the garden
- Create an appealing greenspace for our streets
- Require little maintenance, with occasional weeding, pruning, mulching and hand watering.
- Create a cooling effect and counteract the heat island effects in summer
- Provide a habitat for local wildlife and promote biodiversity

We have put together this guide to help you create your own low maintenance waterwise verge. Water Corporation also have a [Step by step guide to creating a waterwise verge](#) that includes garden design illustrations with corresponding plant species lists.

Remove lawn and weeds

Remove grass and weeds by spraying with an appropriate herbicide, such as glyphosate (commonly known as Roundup). Always apply as per the directions on the pack, including follow up treatments as required.

Set the verge ground level at least 7.5cm below surrounding kerbs and paths to allow for mulch on top and ensure finished levels are only slightly below adjoining paths or kerbs. This can be achieved by digging a small trench along the kerb and/or paths. There is no need to remove all of your dead lawn, you can simply dig through it to plant and lay the mulch on top of it thus allowing the lawn to break down and provide organic matter to the soil.

Prepare the soil

Good soil is the foundation of a healthy waterwise garden, the healthier your soil the more drought resistant your plants will be.

If using a range of exotic and native plants or if your verge will need be irrigated, we encourage residents to incorporate soil conditioners like composted organic matter and clay, such as Betonite, within the top 30cm of soil to improve moisture and nutrient holding capacity.

Perth's sandy soils can become water repellent in dry weather. Applying a quality soil wetting agent will increase 'wettability', allowing water to penetrate deep into the root zone. This is particularly important when planting, to help your plants establish.

When buying soil conditioner or wetting agents select products with the Waterwise and Smart Approved WaterMark symbols and refer to the manufacturer's instructions for application rates. For more information visit watercorporation.com.au/products

Choose waterwise plants

Consider the existing conditions of your verge, such as soil type and sun exposure, and how they may influence your choice of plants.

Unirrigated dryland, native plants are the most appropriate for verge gardens as they can survive our hot dry summers with little to no supplementary watering. These are typically local native plant species which are drought tolerant and common to your local area.

Ensure plants are set back from the kerb to ensure pedestrians area able to step off the road for safety. If plants are within 2m of the kerb they should be prostrate groundcovers that are able to be stepped on if needed.

To find plants suitable for your local area and garden type visit your local native plant nursery or check watercorporation.com.au/plants

Apply mulch

Applying good waterwise mulch will help to reduce plant stress and evaporation loss, suppress weed growth and greatly improve the appearance of your garden.

Spread a 5-7cm thick even layer of coarse mulch, keeping clear from the stem of plants. It will help to reduce plant stress and evaporation, suppress weed growth and improve the appearance of your garden.

Finished mulch level must sit just below adjoining kerbs and footpaths, to prevent mulch from spreading beyond the garden bed, flowing into stormwater systems and creating a hazard. This can be achieved by digging the small trench along the length of your kerb which you then fill with mulch, this will also help retain water within the verge.

Irrigation

Ideally your waterwise verge won't need a permanent irrigation system, as once established unirrigated dryland, native plants can survive our hot dry summers with little to no supplementary watering.

If you do require irrigation, Water Corporation recommends sub-surface drip irrigation. If you need help with irrigation, your local [Waterwise Irrigator](#) can help.

Remember to check your [watering days](#) and be sure to apply for a watering [exemption](#) if your new verge garden needs additional watering.

Maintenance

Once you achieve coverage of the verge with native plants after the first year or two weeding should be reduced. However to keep your verge neat and tidy it is best to conduct regular hand weeding or spraying if required.

Native plants can be 'tip pruned' regularly, just break off the tips of plant stems with your fingers or with pruning shears and let it drop to the ground. Pruning should be undertaken to ensure sight lines for vehicles are maintained.

Mulch can be reapplied when needed. Irrigation systems should be checked regularly for faults and irrigations schedules changed when required, turned off in winter or gradually reducing watering as the native plants reach maturity.

More information

Visit [Water Corporation's website](#) for more handy tips, garden design ideas including plant species lists and videos on how to makeover your verge.