

Sustainable Gardening in Darebin

This revised Sustainable Gardening booklet was produced by Darebin City Council in 2020.

Original text by Sustainable Gardening Australia.

Printed on recycled paper with vegetable based inks

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Darebin Council is committed to contributing to the achievement of sustainability within Darebin and promoting sustainability to others.



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INTRODUCTION

Gardening is all about creating a beautiful environment. Sustainable gardening is about gardening in a way that supports the natural environment and ecosystems of the place where we live, and minimising our negative impacts.

Gardening can benefit our local environment in so many ways. If we plant local plants we provide food and shelter for birds, bees and butterflies. By conserving water in the garden we help maintain water levels in our reservoirs. If we minimise our use of chemicals, we help to keep stormwater runoff into creeks and streams chemical free. By growing food in our gardens we can reap environmental and health benefits. If we purchase renewable resources for the garden instead of non-renewable resources, we can help to protect our old growth forests and river ecosystems.

Creating sustainable gardens and encouraging biodiversity are also a great way for us all to take action on the climate emergency together. By composting our

food waste and using it on our garden rather than sending it to landfill, we reduce harmful greenhouse gases. Our plants and trees help draw down carbon from the atmosphere, as well as providing shade and shelter and reducing the heat generated by the many hard surfaces of our city.

It is easy to create beautiful gardens that suit our local climate and soil and support our natural environment. Sustainable gardens can be introduced gradually e.g. as an exotic plant dies, replace it with a local plant. Sustainable gardens are low maintenance, as they require less watering, lower or no application of fertilisers and chemicals, and less mowing and pruning.

And last but not least - gardening is good for our souls! Spending time in our gardens with family, friends and neighbours is a great way to connect with nature and each other.

Sustainable gardens: good for us, our communities and our planet.

GARDEN DESIGN

Many gardens still have a traditional English layout, which usually includes a paved sitting area, large open lawn and flowerbeds of exotic plants around the outside.

With many people now having busier lifestyles, modern gardens are becoming smaller in size and requiring less maintenance. This does not mean that your garden cannot be sustainable, it just means it needs to be designed well.

A sustainable garden design can offer habitat for wildlife, provide you with fresh food, and can even impact your household energy use. For example, well placed deciduous trees and climbers can provide shade in summer and light in winter, reducing heating and cooling costs for your home.

Interior design, architecture, cars and fashion change to suit new lifestyles. It's time gardens did too. To design a sustainable garden, take the time to work out how to create a garden that you feel comfortable with, that maximises the space you have, and that suits your lifestyle, local soil and climate.

You are on your way to a sustainable garden if you:

- Have a plan of sun/shade, slope and soil variation in your garden
- Have a rough planting plan that groups plants according to their water, sun and soil needs
- Have designed your garden for low water use (page 18)
- Have thoughts about the amount of garden waste you might produce (e.g. law clippings and prunings), and ways for managing this waste onsite (e.g. composting and mulching)
- Have maximised the permeable surface e.g. replacing concrete with gravel
- Have designed your garden to have flow and interest to create appeal
- Have designed your garden to reduce your home energy use
- Have included food production in your garden
- Have included variations in your garden design to increase habitat and food sources for wildlife.

GARDEN DESIGN TIPS

1

List what you need (shed, washing line, water tank, kids swings, entertainment area) and what you want (vegetable garden, shade area, pond, fruit tree/s).

2

Do a site analysis, (sun, shade, slope, privacy – all the problems that need solving) which will tell you what your site will let you do.



3

Do a scaled plan or mark out where different garden elements will go (following the tips in this guide). For example, placing a new shed in a shady corner, vegetables where they get full sun, a pond where it can be seen from inside the house, and a shade tree to the north of the house.

4

Find a style you like that suits your garden, so your paving, pots, water features, and plants match, especially in a courtyard garden.

5

Make garden beds bigger and lawns smaller. If you mulch all beds this will reduce your maintenance and enable you to create interesting areas within your garden.

6

If you want to reduce your lawn area to make bigger garden beds, you need to know what type of lawn you have. If you have a fine lawn grass such as Rye or Fescue you can mow the lawn low, cover with 8–10 sheets of newspaper (overlapping), add 10–15cm of pea straw on top, wait 3–4 months and then plant directly into it. This must be done when the soil is moist and all the grass should have died. If you have ‘running’ grasses such as Couch or Kikuyu they will not be eliminated by newspaper and mulch.

Running grasses are tough to remove. Try one of these methods to remove them:

- cover the grass with a sheet of clear plastic for several weeks in hot weather so that the grass effectively ‘cooks’,
- mow the lawn area you wish to remove on the lowest mower setting and then dig out the remaining root system.



Further Information

The Australian Garden – Diana Snape
Beautiful Gardens with Less Water – John Patrick
Bold Romantic Gardens – Oehme Van Swede
www.darebin.vic.gov.au/environment

SUSTAINABLE PRODUCT SELECTION

When buying products for the garden we often don't think about where they have come from, for example, River Red Gum trees grow in woodlands which are part of an intricate ecosystem that supports native fauna. Red gum timber is used to produce items such as bark chips, tomato stakes and railway sleepers – harvesting this product is unsustainable. With some thought we can support more environmentally sound practices through the products we choose for our gardens and homes.



Further Information

Building Timbers –
The Wilderness Society
www.sgaonline.org.au

Sustainable Gardening in Darebin

You are on your way to a sustainable garden if you:

- Ask where a product comes from and avoid buying unsustainable products
- Use recycled products, like bricks, timbers, plastic sleepers
- Reuse your plastic plant pots or put them in a Garden Center pot recycling bin



ALTERNATIVE PRODUCT TIPS

- 1 Look for Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified timbers. While some outdoor furniture companies claim teak is plantation-harvested in Asia, this magnificent tree is a rainforest plant that cannot be grown in plantations.
- 2 Grass trees, tree ferns and native orchids may have been sourced illegally from the forest. Plants should be sold with a government tag stating they have been legally collected.
- 3 Make sure to ask where mulch has come from as some are sourced from the logging of old growth forests or contain weed seeds.
- 4 Ceramic pots fired using gas and produced locally have a lower environmental impact than those fired using coal or wood and transported from overseas.
- 5 River pebbles may have been sourced from waterways in developing countries such as China and India. This destroys the local ecosystem and causes silt to wash down stream to communities who rely on the river for drinking and washing. Use locally crushed rock and granitic gravel.



CARING FOR YOUR SOIL

Healthy soil = healthy plants. Soil needs organic matter (mulch, compost, manure, grass clippings). Worms break it down to make food for plants to use and their burrows allow air into the soil so the plant roots can breathe. Organic matter needs to be replaced regularly as the worms consume it and plants absorb the nutrients. If organic matter is not added, the soil becomes like concrete in the summer and a sticky mess in the winter. In addition, most people want a low maintenance garden. This is much easier if you look after your soil.

You are on your way to a sustainable garden if you:

- Check mulch levels and replace every year to bring back to 8-10cm deep
- Regularly add organic matter to your soil
- Know which are the best types of mulch for different types of plants
- Have at least 3 worms in a spadeful of soil wherever you dig in the garden
- Only dig your soil when you need to.

SOIL IMPROVEMENT TIPS

1

The soil needs to be damp before adding mulch, so late spring (November) is the best time to apply mulch (once the winter rains have soaked in).

2

Top up mulch annually to 8-10cm deep. Mulches made from recycled organics are an excellent choice as they save water, last longer and feed the soil as they break down.

3

Spreading compost over your soil (under the mulch layer) will encourage worms in your garden.

4

Soil improvement such as pea straw placed on the soil surface is generally only required for exotic plants, vegetables and fruit trees. Most local and native plants like a relatively infertile soil, so they prefer bark mulch on its own without soil improvement.

5

Pea straw and lucerne are the best if you have not mulched the soil for a long time, as they break down quickly. Bark mulch has little nutrients, so it won't improve the soil as much.

6

When buying new soil for your garden don't only buy topsoil, buy a soil that includes recycled organics or compost. Or you can use your homemade compost to add to your soil.

7

Don't cultivate your soil unless it is very compacted e.g. after building works. Digging destroys the soil structure, therefore destroying the air holes and drainage spaces.

TESTING YOUR SOIL BEFORE YOU PLANT

VegeSafe is a community science participation program run by Environmental Science staff at Macquarie University. They seek to inform the community about metal and metalloid contaminants in garden soil through their soil metal testing program.

If you have a vegetable patch or are concerned about metal contamination in your backyard,

you are encouraged to send soil samples for free soil metal testing. You will receive a formal report containing the results of your soil analysis, and advice about what to do if your soils contain elevated concentrations of metals and metalloids.

More information:

www.research.science.mq.edu.au/vegesafe



Further Information

The Natural Gardener – Jeffrey Hodges
Gardening Down-Under – Kevin Handreck
The Natural Magic of Mulch – Michael J. Roads
www.sgaonline.org.au www.darebin.vic.gov.au/environment

Sustainable Gardening in Darebin

COMPOST AND WORM FARMING

Composting or worm farming your food scraps, grass and garden clippings (organics) can provide you with an excellent source of free garden food and soil improver. In addition to creating great fertiliser, it reduces greenhouse gases, saves water and dramatically reduces the amount of waste going to landfill.

You are on your way to a sustainable garden if you:

- Make your own compost
- Can list 10 things you can put in compost and 3 things you shouldn't put in compost
- Put most of your food waste in your compost not your garbage bin
- Put most of your green waste in your food and green waste bin
- Use your compost as a fertiliser under mulch, mix with potting mix in containers, use on top of seed beds in the vegetable garden or stewed in water to make a liquid feed
- Use a worm farm or Bokashi bin if you live in an apartment or have a small garden



COMPOSTING TIPS

1

Your compost bin or heap should be located on soil, so that it drains well and worms and bacteria can enter the bin to decompose the organic waste.

2

All compost bins or heaps need a balance of materials that:

- Are high in nitrogen, such as kitchen scraps and grass clippings. You can also add blood and bone, Dynamic Lifter or chicken manure for a nitrogen boost.
- Contain carbon, such as dried leaves or shredded newspapers.
- Aim for a ratio of 30 parts carbon: 1 part nitrogen.

Spreading compost over your soil (under the mulch layer) will encourage worms in your garden.

3

In addition, the compost heap or bin needs:

- Water - enough so that the contents are moist but not wet.
- Oxygen - added by regularly turning over the contents.
- Warmth - locate your compost bin in a sunny place, but not with direct sunlight all day.

4

If you are left with half decomposed lumps in your compost add smaller pieces of food to the bin/heap to ensure it all decomposes evenly. Always crush eggshells.

5

Ants and slaters are an indication your heap is too dry. Add a sprinkling of water or less dry matter.

6

Visit the SGA website for information on compost trouble shooting. www.sgaonline.org.au

SOLVING COMMON COMPOST PROBLEMS

Why is my compost:

“left with half decomposed big lumps?”

Adding smaller pieces to the bin/heap should ensure that it all decomposes evenly. Avocado seeds, pineapple tops, eggshells, twigs and other woody items should be crushed or chopped before adding.

“smelly?”

Either: Too much nitrogen containing matter and not enough carbon. Try adding more dry materials such as dried chopped up leaves and newspaper.

Or: Make sure you aid decomposition by using a garden fork/compost aerator and turning over the bin/heap occasionally (maybe once a week) to introduce more air. This prevents anaerobic bacteria from taking over and producing the smells. In a compost bin you can add lengths of slotted agipipe to increase aeration.

“crawling with ants and slaters?”

The heap is too dry. Add a sprinkling of water or less dry matter. Ants and slaters are not harmful at all but they do indicate that your compost will not decompose rapidly enough.

“attracting flies or maggots?”

If you see tiny flies (drosophila) every time you open the lid, rest assured that they are there because they enjoy the contents of your bin/heap, especially if you have been adding fruit peelings. Add a blanket cover to the contents of your bin/heap, such as hessian sacking or carpet felt underlay.

“visited by rats or mice?”

Meat scraps or fish bones can be added to compost if it is working efficiently and quickly. However, they are best avoided since they do encourage vermin, especially over summer. Rats and mice enter the bin by digging underneath, so fasten a piece of fine mesh wire under the bin before commencing.

“taking so long to do anything?!!!”

The carbon/nitrogen ratio needs to be altered. Remember if too wet, add dry matter, such as newspaper and if too dry, add water along with something high in nitrogen such as blood and bone, Dynamic Lifter pellets, or chicken manure. And don't forget to regularly turn the heap over!



ADD TO YOUR COMPOST

- ✓ fruit and vegetable scraps
- ✓ coffee grounds and tea bags
- ✓ crushed egg shells
- ✓ animal fur, human hair
- ✓ onions and cut up citrus fruit
- ✓ pizza and egg cartons
- ✓ vacuum cleaner dust
- ✓ pure cotton articles (cut up)
- ✓ grass clippings (3-4cm layers)
- ✓ cut up prunings
- ✓ weeds without seed heads
- ✓ blood and bone, manure
- ✓ shredded newspaper
- ✓ small amounts of wood ash
- ✓ straw and dried leaves
- ✓ Pineapple tops and avocado seeds (cut up or crushed, otherwise they will take longer to break down)

KEEP OUT OF YOUR COMPOST

- ✗ fish and meat
- ✗ cat and dog droppings; consider a pet poo worm farm instead
- ✗ big woody prunings
- ✗ bulbous weeds e.g. oxalis spp.
- ✗ weeds with runners e.g. couch grass
- ✗ bleached or glossy office paper
- ✗ Plastic bags and packaging (even those labelled as compostable and biodegradable)
- ✗ fruit and vegetables infected with gall wasp or Queensland fruit fly (see page 45).



WORM FARMING

Using a worm farm is an excellent way to reduce the amount of organic waste in your garbage. Worms eat the organic waste and turn it into liquid fertiliser (worm liquid) and worm castings which are great fertilisers for pot plants and gardens. Worm farms can be a great option for smaller gardens and apartments.

Worm farms can be purchased through Council or garden centres and come with easy to follow instructions. You will need to buy composting worms for your worm farm. Common composting worm types sold are Tiger, Red Wigglers and Indian Blues.

Follow the worm farm instructions and remove the castings and worm liquid as you need them, or as trays fill up and your worms are eating food in another tray. Castings can be mixed directly into the soil around your plants or before you plant. To use the worm liquid fertiliser, dilute it in water 1:10 before adding to your plants. You can even bottle it to store for short periods, or give to friends.

Keep these items out of your worm farm:

- citrus and pineapple
- onion, garlic and chillies
- Dairy and oils
- Meat and fish



WORM FARM TIPS

1

Feed your worms gradually and don't overfeed them. Begin with small amounts of organic waste, allowing gradual build-up over the months as the ecosystem evolves. As a guide maintain two centimetres of food over half the surface area of your worm farm. If you are adding more food than the worms can eat, your worm farm may become smelly.

2

Worms like food wastes like vegetable and fruit peelings, tea leaves, crushed eggshells and small amounts of bread. They also like small amounts of soiled paper and cardboard such as shredded egg cartons. Avoid meat scraps as they can produce offensive odours and attract rats and mice.

3

Chop up your food and garden waste as much as possible to feed to the worms. Add aged manure, mouldy leaves or mulch litter and regular light sprinkles of mature compost to accelerate the composting process and inhibit vinegar flies.

4

Worms like temperatures between 18-24 °C. Worms stop eating when they are cold and can die if they are too hot. In summer keep them in the shade and ideally find a warmer spot for the winter.

5

Worms like it moist, but not too moist! Keep a few layers of moist newspaper or hessian over the top of your worms, underneath the lid. Keep the rain out and don't flood your worms. If your worm farm is too wet your worms may drown at the bottom or you may have huge numbers of small vinegar flies (a small amount are healthy). Make sure you regularly drain the worm farm, or keep the tap open with a container underneath to catch the worm liquid. If your farm is too wet try adding torn up newspaper to absorb excess moisture.

6

Keep the worm farm lid on to keep out the rain and the light. Worms like the dark.

5

Worms are the perfect pet, they don't need to be fed every day and temporary absence or limited availability of food is not a major concern. If you go away in summer you may need to position/prepare your worm farm to stay cool and moist in your absence.

8

You can try a pet poo only worm farm. Don't add any other organic food to this type of worm farm and do not put resulting castings and liquid around any edible plants. You also need to avoid using it for a period after you have wormed your pet.

FOOD AND GREEN WASTE RECYCLING BIN

If you have excess food and green waste that you can't compost, you can contact Council for a food and green waste bin (annual fees apply). You can place items like meat scraps, fish bones, bread, general leftovers, egg shells, coffee grounds, fruit and vegetable scraps in this bin, along with grass cuttings, weeds, leaves, flowers and prunings (up to 30cm in length).

Your food and green waste is turned into nutrient rich mulch and compost to be used on Victorian farms and gardens. Please do not place any type of plastic (even compostable or biodegradable), glass, or other incorrect items in this bin. Annual bundled branch collections are also available. More information can be found at www.darebin.vic.gov.au/foodwaste.

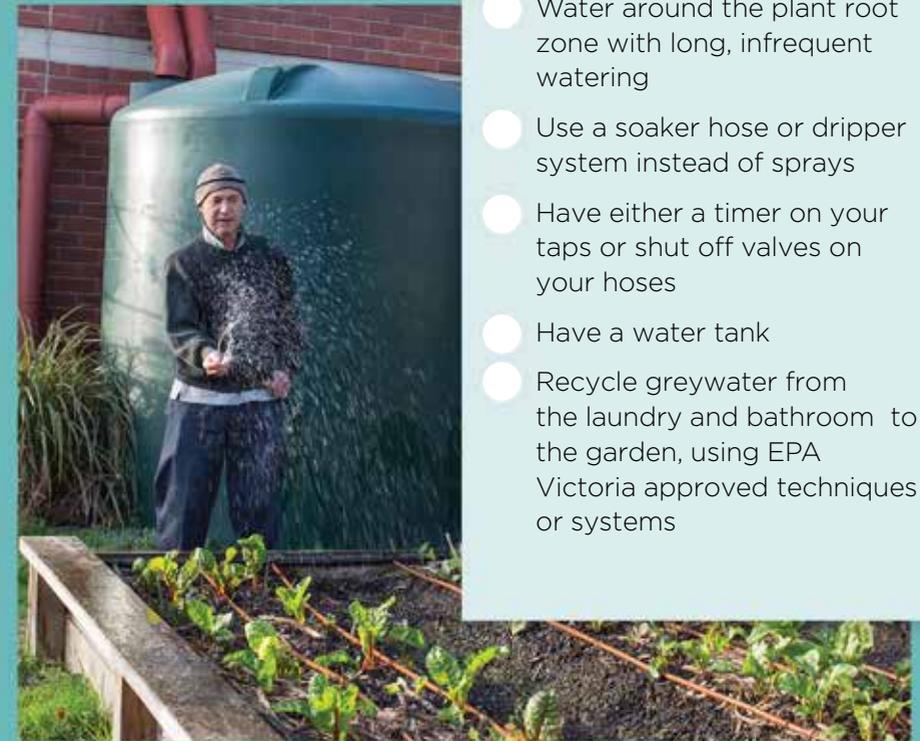


Further Information

The Compost Book – David Taylor and Yvonne Taylor
Gardening Down-Under – Kevin Handreck
www.darebin.vic.gov.au/foodwaste

WATER

Australia is one of the driest continents on earth. Water use in the garden is a major contributor to high residential water consumption levels. By improving the soil and using alternative water sources for the garden such as rain water collected in tanks, stormwater or greywater directed into the garden, installing efficient irrigation systems and using good garden design, significant water savings can be made.



You are on your way to a sustainable garden if you:

- Have 30% or more of your garden planted with plants in the Darebin Local Plant Guide
- Mulch all your garden beds and pots to reduce how much water is required
- Don't have a lawn, or if you do, cut your lawn long (8-10cm) over summer
- Water in the coolest part of the day, between 6pm-10am
- Water around the plant root zone with long, infrequent watering
- Use a soaker hose or dripper system instead of sprays
- Have either a timer on your taps or shut off valves on your hoses
- Have a water tank
- Recycle greywater from the laundry and bathroom to the garden, using EPA Victoria approved techniques or systems

WATER TIPS

1

After you have watered, dig down to see how far it has penetrated, it should be at least 10cm.

2

Water between 6pm and 10am to avoid evaporation in the warmest part of the day.

3

Install a rainwater tank. By watering your garden with captured rainwater, you reduce demand on Melbourne's water supply system. Speak to an expert to find a suitably sized water tank.

4

Check and clean your irrigation system every spring.

5

Mulch all your garden beds and pots. Mulch made from recycled organics is a great water saving product.

6

Check the weather forecast to avoid watering before rain.

7

Avoid using micro-sprays. They waste up to 70% of water through drift and evaporation and if the soil is mulched, water will not penetrate to the soil.

8

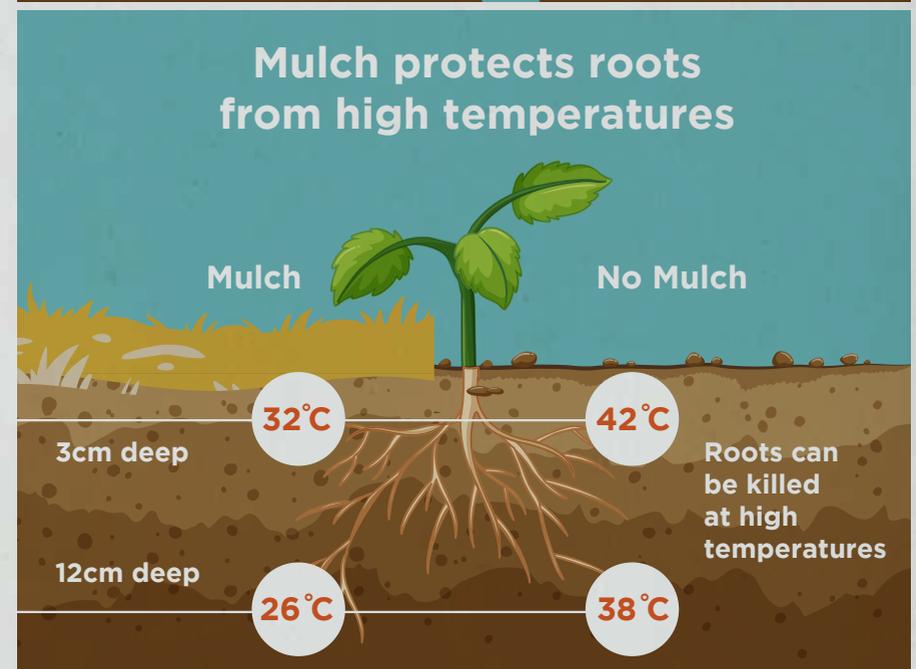
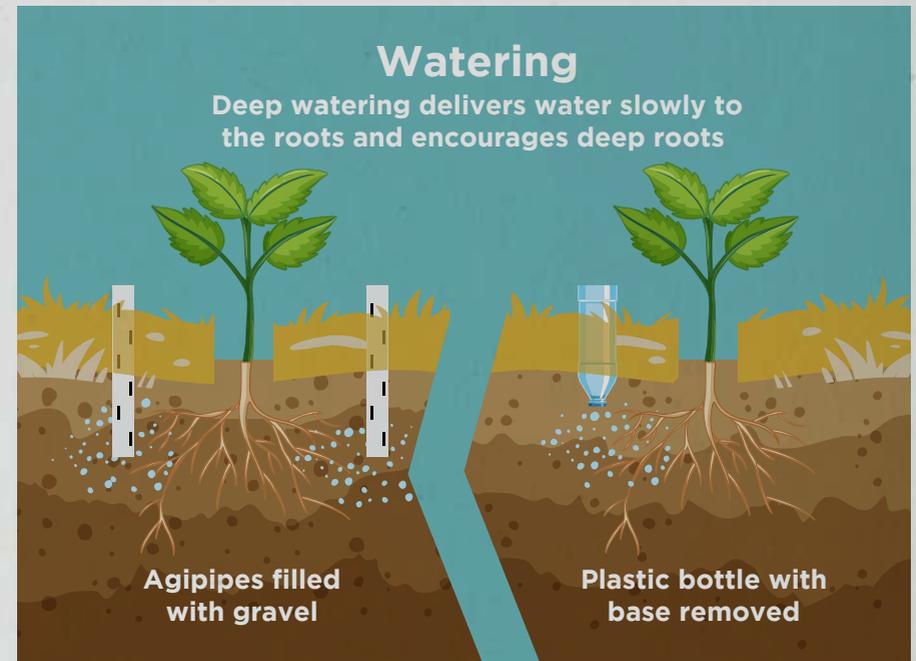
Water pots and plants with a low pressure on the hose. The water should be running slowly, not on a spray, as this does not penetrate very deeply.

9

Go for a tough drought tolerant grass like 'Sir Walter Buffalo'; a native grass such as *Microlaena stipoides* (won't take football games, but is fine for walking on); or a native groundcover like *Myoporum parvifolium* for the front garden.

10

Greywater from the bathroom and laundry must be collected and used according to EPA Victoria guidelines to avoid potential health risks. Visit www.epa.vic.gov.au for more information



RAINGARDENS

To create a water efficient garden and improve the health of our creeks you may want to consider installing a raingarden near a down pipe. Raingardens filter and slow down stormwater that drains to our creeks when it rains.

For further information on installing a raingarden, visit: www.melbournewater.com.au/using-and-saving-water-home/raingardens

GREYWATER

Greywater is domestic wastewater, excluding toilet waste which is sometimes referred to as blackwater. It can be a good water resource in dry periods but its reuse can carry health and environmental risks.

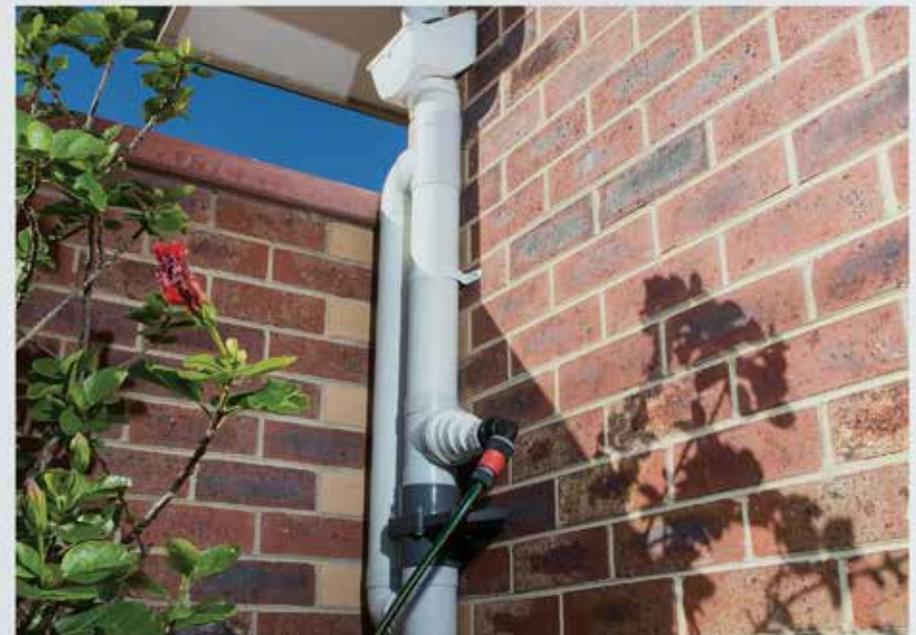
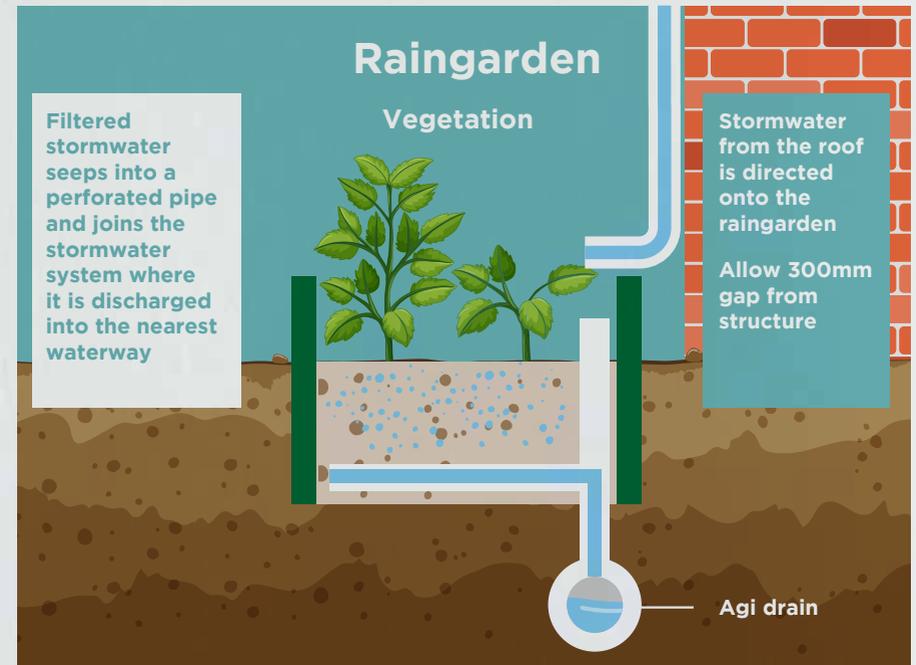
The best quality greywater comes from the rinse water of your washing machine, bath, shower or hand basin. Toilet and kitchen wastewater should always go to sewer. Untreated greywater can be diverted on a temporary basis to sites within

your backyard using a bucket or diverter. However, the continual discharge of greywater can potentially cause problems for your garden if not managed.

Greywater can contain a number of micro-organisms such as bacteria and viruses, as well as chemicals from cleaning agents, so be careful to follow the tips recommended, particularly rotating the areas you water and when choosing detergents.

Further Information

Waterwise Plants and Gardening – Kevin Walsh
Waterwise House and Garden – Allan Windust
www.sgaonline.org.au www.yvw.com.au
www.epa.vic.gov.au www.melbournewater.com.au



GREYWATER DOS AND DON'TS

DO

- ✓ Only use greywater from baths, showers, hand basins and washing machines (final rinse water).
- ✓ Only use low phosphate detergents.
- ✓ Only use greywater on the garden and rotate the areas you water.
- ✓ Only apply water that the soil can absorb.
- ✓ Wash your hands after watering with greywater.

DON'T

- ✗ Use greywater on vegetable or herb gardens.
- ✗ Use greywater that has any faecal contamination, for example wastewater used to launder nappies.
- ✗ Use kitchen wastewater (including dishwashers) due to high concentration of food wastes and chemicals.
- ✗ Store greywater for more than 24 hours.
- ✗ Let children or pets drink or play with greywater.
- ✗ Allow greywater to flow from your property or enter stormwater systems.

STOP

- ✗ Using greywater during wet periods.
- ✗ Using greywater if odours are generated and plants do not appear to be healthy.



PLANT SELECTION

Factors that will guide plant selection for your garden include soil type, drainage patterns, aspect (i.e. full sun, part shade and shade) and local climate. Plants need to be grouped together according to their sun/shade, water and fertiliser needs. Visit a nursery for advice on plants to suit the position you have in mind.

It is best to use local (indigenous) plants wherever possible because they are well suited to the local soil and climate. They do not require large amounts of nutrients and, once established, need less water.

There are many beautiful plants local to Darebin. Refer to the Darebin Local Plant Guide of this booklet or chat to your local indigenous nursery about recommendations.



You should never use plants that are known environmental weeds. Two thirds of the weeds found in Victoria's natural environment (parks, and along waterways and coasts) are actually 'garden escapees'. Their seeds are spread from gardens by the wind, birds and animals or by people dumping garden cuttings into the bush and waterways. Weeds compete with our local plants for light, nutrients and water. Before too long they can replace local plants, leaving native animals without food or habitat.

As gardeners we need to know which plants can escape and destroy our unique natural environments. Refer to the Darebin Garden Escapees Guide. Consider removing these and replacing potential garden escapees with local plants.

Please refer to the inside back cover of this booklet for more information on indigenous plants and environmental weeds.

DAREBIN LOCAL PLANT GUIDE

These plants are great for Darebin gardens as they grow here naturally and are good for native wildlife.

Some of these plants provide habitat for...



Birds



Butterflies



Frogs



Lizards

Suitable conditions for plants...



Full Sun



Part Shade



Shade



Drought Tolerant



Needs seasonal water

Other...



Height



Width



Suitable as hedge

CLIMBERS

Purple Coral Pea

(*Hardenbergia violacea*)

Grows to: ↓ prostrate or climber ↔ 3m.
Soil requirements: Well-drained soil.
Features: Climbing plant useful as a screening plant. Grows well in pots.



Small-leaved Clematis

(*Clematis microphylla*)

Grows to: ↓ prostrate or climber ↔ 2-4m.
Soil requirements: Well-drained soil.
Features: Climbing plant useful as a screening plant or ground cover. Grows well in pots.



GROUNDCOVERS AND WILDFLOWERS

Black Anther Flax-lily

(*Dianella admixta*)

Grows to: ↓ 30cm-1m ↔ 0.5-2.5m

Soil requirements: Well-drained.

Features: Hardy, easily maintained plant. Ideal for growing close to trees.



Clustered Everlasting

(*Chrysocephalum semipapposum*)

Grows to: ↓ 30cm-1m ↔ 1-3m

Features: Very hardy. Prune in winter to rejuvenate. Great in rock gardens, in pots, under trees or in an open position in the garden.



Creeping Bossiaea

(*Bossiaea prostrata*)

Grows to: ↓ 10cm ↔ 0.5 - 1.5m

Soil requirements: Well-drained soils.

Features: Grows well under other plants.



Cut-leaf Daisy

(*Brachyscome multifida*)

Grows to: ↓ 10-40cm ↔ 20cm-1m

Soil requirements: Prefers moist soil and will tolerate dryness once established.

Features: Grows well in pots. Fast growing. Light pruning after flowering.



Kidney Plant

(*Dichondra repens*)

Grows to: ↓ prostrate ↔ creeping herb.

Soil requirements: Well-drained soils.

Features: An excellent lawn substitute in moist shady areas where traffic is light.



Running Postman

(*Kennedia prostrata*)

Grows to: ↓ prostrate ↔ 1-2.5m

Soil requirements: Accepts most soils but avoid poor drainage.

Features: Attractive as a groundcover, in tubs, hanging baskets, cascading over rocks, walls and under trees.



Tufted Bluebell

(*Wahlenbergia communis*)

Grows to: ↓ 15-50cm ↔ 15cm

Soil requirements: Moist well-drained soil

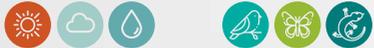
Features: Looks great in containers or when planted amongst grasses.



GRASSES

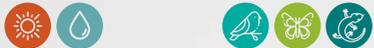
Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*)

Grows to: ↓ 70-90cm ↔ 40-70cm
Soil requirements: Adaptable to most soils.
Features: Attractive tufting grass.



Silky Blue-grass (*Dichanthium sericeum*)

Grows to: ↓ 30-50cm ↔ 30-40cm
Soil requirements: Well-drained heavy clay soils.
Features: Blue-grey appearance provides great contrast.



Wallaby Grasses (*Rytidosperma spp.*)

Grows to: ↓ 30-40cm ↔ 30-40cm
Soil requirements: Well-drained soil.
Features: Excellent contrast plant in landscaping. Can make an excellent lawn if infrequently mown.



SHRUBS (UP TO 4M)

Austral Indigo (*Indigofera australis*)

Grows to: ↓ 1-2m ↔ 1-2 m
Soil requirements: Well-drained soil.
Features: Responds well to regular pruning.



Gold Dust Wattle (*Acacia acinacea*)

Grows to: ↓ 50cm-2.5m ↔ 2-4m
Soil requirements: Adaptable to most soils
Features: A good low screening plant. Suitable for large pots/tubs. Annual pruning is beneficial.



Hop Goodenia (*Goodenia ovata*)

Grows to: ↓ 1-2.5m ↔ 1-3m
Soil requirements: Prefers damp soil
Features: Fast growing. It responds well to pruning.



Large-leaf Bush-pea (*Pultenaea daphnoides*)

Grows to: 1-3m 50cm-2m
Features: Attractive tall shrub.



SHRUBS (UP TO 4M)

River Bottlebrush (*Callistemon sieberi*)

Grows to: ↓ 3-10m ↔ 2-6m
Soil requirements: Adaptable to many soils.
Features: Excellent screening shrub.
Pruning encourages flowering.



Rock Correa (*Correa glabra*)

Grows to: ↓ 1-3m ↔ 1-3m
Soil requirements: Well-drained soils
Features: Establishes well under existing trees.



Rosemary Grevillea (*Grevillea rosemarinifolia*)

Grows to: ↓ 1-3m ↔ 2-3m
Soil requirements: Well-drained soil
Features: Pruning will encourage more compact growth. Grows well in large pots/tubs.



Tree Violet (*Melicytus dentata*)

Grows to: ↓ 2-4m ↔ 1-2.5m
Soil requirements: Well-drained soils
Features: It has violet coloured berries.



Twiggy Daisy-bush (*Olearia ramulosa*)

Grows to: ↓ 50cm-2.5m ↔ 1m
Soil requirements: Well-drained soils
Features: Pruning as the flowers begin to fade usually encourages a further flush of flowers.



TREES (OVER 4M)

Black Sheoke (*Allocasuarina littoralis*)

Grows to: ↓ 4-8m ↔ 2-5m
Soil requirements: Well-drained soil
Features: Excellent screen plant and windbreak.



Lightwood (*Acacia implexa*)

Grows to: ↓ 5-15m ↔ 4-7m
Soil requirements: Adaptable to most soils
Features: Small screen or shade tree.



DAREBIN GARDEN ESCAPEES

All the plants in this section are serious garden escapees in Darebin. Garden escapees are generally more invasive than indigenous plants and will often displace native flora becoming the dominant species very quickly.

Invasive plants reduce the biodiversity of the environment and often create a monoculture if left unchecked. Managing Garden Escapees is costly and reduces the level of revegetation and

rehabilitation programs that can be undertaken. Please do not plant these species, and if you have them in your garden, please remove them and replace them with one of the suggested similar non-invasive indigenous plants.

CLIMBERS AND CREEPERS

Blue Periwinkle

(Vinca major)

Forms thick carpets.
Leaves broad and glossy

Replace with Purple Coral-pea

(Hardenbergia violacea)



Bridal Creeper

(Asparagus asparagoides)

A scrambling climber. Leaves shiny, broadly oval to round.

Replace with Purple Coral-pea

(Hardenbergia violacea)



English Ivy

(Hedera helix)

Fast climber can grow to 30m up trees or creeping along the ground and forming carpets. Shiny, triangular, dark green leaves with pale veins. Poisonous if eaten and can cause skin and eye irritation.

Replace with Small-leaved Clematis

(Clematis microphylla)



CLIMBERS AND CREEPERS

Madeira Vine

(*Anredera cordifolia*)

A fast climber that can cover trees up to 30m tall. Fleshy, egg-shaped leaves with a heart-shaped base to 12cm long

Replace with Small-leafed Clematis

(*Clematis microphylla*)



Morning Glory

(*Ipomoea indica*)

Fast growing climber. Leaves spear shaped, bright green.

Replace with Large bindweed

(*Calystegia sepium*)



Moth Plant

(*Araujia sericifera*)

A climber that can grow to 10m tall. Triangular leaves to 11cm long. Fruit looks like a choko. Poisonous to poultry and dogs. Sap can cause skin irritation.

Replace with Common Appleberry

(*Billardiera scandens*)



Wandering Tradescantia

(*Tradescantia fluminensis*)

Forms thick carpets. Glossy green leaves, oval to 4cm. Can cause allergic reaction to dogs with skin irritation particularly on the stomach.

Replace with Kidney Plant

(*Dichondra repens*)



GRASSES AND HERBS

Agapanthus

(*Agapanthus spp.*)

Leaves poisonous. Sticky sap can ulcer mouth.

Replace with Pale Flax-Lily

(*Dianella longifolia*)



Arum Lily

(*Zantedeschia aethiopica*)

Highly poisonous.

Replace with Pale Flax-Lily

(*Dianella longifolia*)



Fountain Grass

(*Cenchrus setaceus*)

Replace with Wallaby Grass

(*Rytidosperma spp.*)



Pampas Grass

(*Cortaderia spp.*)

Leaves easily cut the skin and cause irritation when handled.

Replace with Thatch Saw-sedge

(*Gahnia radula*)



SHRUBS

Castor Oil Plant

(*Ricinus communis*)

Highly poisonous seeds.

Replace with Prickly Currant-bush

(*Coprosma quadrifida*)



Cootamundra Wattle

(*Acacia baileyana*)

Replace with Black Wattle

(*Acacia mearnsii*)



Cotoneaster

(*Cotoneaster spp.*)

Berries contain toxins that can be harmful to infants if eaten.

Replace with Prickly Currant-bush

(*Coprosma quadrifida*)



English Broom

(*Cytisus scoparius*)

Seeds poisonous if eaten in quantity

Replace with Slender Bitter-pea

(*Daviesia leptophylla*)

and Golden Spray

(*Viminaria juncea*)



Flax leaf Broom

(*Genista linifolia*)

Seeds highly poisonous.

Replace with Slender Bitter-pea

(*Daviesia leptophylla*)

and Golden Spray

(*Viminaria juncea*)



Lantana hybrids

(*Lantana camara*)

Toxic to humans and animals.

Replace with Small leaved clematis

(*Clematis microphylla*)



Mirror Bush

(*Coprosma repens*)

Replace with Prickly Currant-bush

(*Coprosma quadrifida*) and Boobialla

(*Myoporum insulare*)



SHRUBS

Montpellier Broom

(Genista monspessulana)

Seeds highly poisonous

Replace with Gold-dust Wattle

(Acacia acinacea)



Prickly Pears

(Opuntia spp.)

Replace with Kangaroo Apple

(Solanum laciniatum)



Sweet Briar

(Rosa rubiginosa)

Replace with Sweet Bursaria

(Bursaria spinosa)



TREES

Desert Ash

(Fraxinus angustifolia)

Replace with Blackwood

(Acacia melanoxylon)



Pine Tree

(Pinus spp.)

Replace with Drooping Sheoak

(Allocasuarina verticillata)



Sweet Pittosporum

(Pittosporum undulatum)

Replace with Muttonwood

(Rapanea howittiana)



HABITAT GARDENING

Attracting native animals to your garden can assist in pest control, encourages pollination and helps contribute to conservation by providing habitat connections between bushland areas. All you need to do is provide wildlife visitors with sources of food, water and shelter. More information on habitat gardening can be found at www.sga.org.au and www.gardensforwildlifevictoria.com



Sustainable Gardening in Darebin

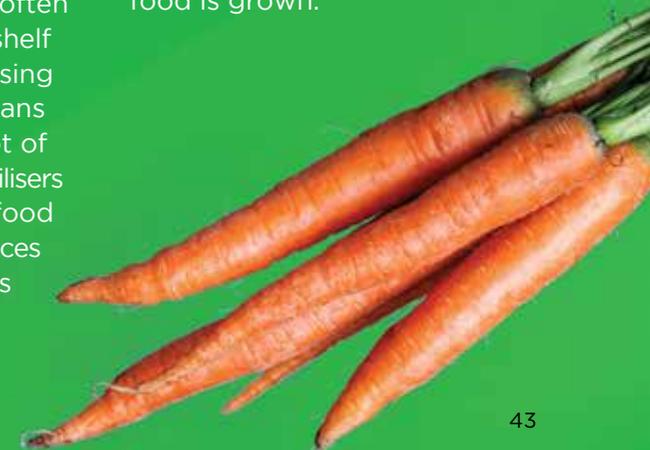
You are on your way to a sustainable garden if you:

- Know the difference between native, indigenous and exotic plants
- Have more than 30% of your garden planted with plants listed in the Darebin Local Plant Guide
- Do not have any of the plants listed in the Darebin Garden Escapees Guide
- Have at least one shade tree of suitable size for your garden
- Have reduced your lawn area to less than 50% of total garden area
- Have grouped your plants according to their water, sun and nutrient needs
- Regularly observe native birds, reptiles, insects and animals in your garden
- Have provided extra sources of food, water and shelter for wildlife.

FOOD GARDENING

There's nothing more satisfying than harvesting your fresh vegetables, fruits and herbs straight from your garden. There are many great reasons to grow your own produce.

- Home grown food is healthy. Fruit and vegetables begin to lose their vitamins as soon as they're picked. After five days some have lost 40-50% of vitamins.
- When you grow your own vegetables, you know exactly what has gone into it and so you can make sure your produce is free from harmful chemicals.
- It is better for the environment and our resilience to climate change. Your organic, home-grown produce is fresher, more nutritious and more delicious than conventionally farmed fruit, vegetables and herbs. The fruit and vegetables sold in supermarkets are often bred for aesthetics, long shelf life and resistance to bruising during transport. This means they are grown using a lot of energy, water, chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Growing food locally and organically reduces greenhouse gas emissions and your environmental footprint.
- Backyard food production can help to cultivate a relationship with your soil and the Earth, and connects you with the seasons and the cycles of nature. A homegrown tomato tastes so much better not just freshly picked, but when you have to wait for them.
- Gardening is therapy. Food gardening can be a gentle, relaxing and stress-lowering form of exercise.
- Children love to watch vegetables grow. Your garden can become an opportunity for children to learn, explore, experiment and taste new flavours. It can also connect kids (and adults) to how their food is grown.



TIPS FOR SETTING UP AND MAINTAINING YOUR VEGETABLE PATCH

1

Fruit and vegetables generally like to grow in the full sun, so make sure to pick a sunny part of your garden for your vegetable patch and fruit trees.

2

Fruit and vegetables need more water and richer soil than local and native plants so it's best to grow them in separate parts of the garden. Read the soil chapter on page 8 for information on testing your soil for contamination and improving soil to get the best results.

3

You can grow vegetables in garden beds, no dig beds (these can be put in over old concrete or paving), wicking beds, or even big pots.

4

Use recycled plastic sleepers, bricks, large stones or recycled hardwood to make raised beds. Never use treated wood, tyres or anything that may have been treated with chemicals which will leach into the soil.

5

To avoid compacting your soil from walking on it, either make a large bed with a few paths through it, or make smaller beds where you can reach without stepping into them (an average reach is 60cm, so if you can walk on either side a bed could be 1.2m wide).

6

To enrich your soil for food gardening add organic fertilisers such as compost, sheep or cow manure, and blood and bone. How much you need depends on the quality of your soil. Many gardens will benefit from at least one large bag of manure and a few handfuls of blood and bone for every few square meters of garden bed.

7

Before planting, consider putting in a drip irrigation watering system. Drip irrigation systems are more water efficient and, dependent on water restrictions, can be set on a timer to save you having to hand water. You may want to consider putting in a rainwater tank specifically for your produce garden. Mulching your garden also saves water.

8

The soil of vegetable gardens need to be kept moist most days, particularly when plants are small. It's best to water plants in the morning as evening watering can result in higher mould and fungi problems. In winter you may rarely need to water due to rain and low evaporation. However when its warmer you may need to water at least three times a week, or every day in particularly hot weather. Fruit trees need a deep watering at least once a week. Pots dry out quicker than gardens and may need daily watering - check the soil.

9

For beginners, seedlings and large seeds are the easiest to grow and can be planted directly into the garden. Follow the directions on the packet or label for plant space requirements. Once planted, water them in thoroughly.

10

Try heritage seeds. The fruit and vegetables of heritage plants generally ripen gradually so you don't have too much produce at once. You can purchase heritage variety seeds and seedlings from the Diggers Club - www.diggers.com.au or try saving your own!

11

Try planting long lasting (perennial) crops that don't need to be replanted every year. This can save you time and money. Great perennial crops include asparagus, strawberries, currants, globe artichokes, some chilli bushes, passionfruit vines, grape vines, fruit trees, nut trees, and woody herbs such as rosemary, sage, oregano, lemon verbena and thyme. Grow mint in a pot as it can take over in garden beds.

12

If you can, try staggering the planting of your crops over time. For example, plant early and then late season tomatoes to get produce from early summer to autumn, or plant a few bok choy every two weeks so you have a regular supply rather than too many all at once. Consider planting crops that can be harvested all season. For example, silverbeet, kale or lettuce from which you can take a few leaves at a time and they will continue to grow.

13

Spread pea straw or lucerne straw over your vegetable patch to reduce water loss due to evaporation. Leave a few centimetres gap around plants to avoid rotting the stem. This straw will break down over time and provide nutrients and organic matter to the soil.

14

Plant flowering plants to attract bees and pollinators to your garden.

15

Rotate the position of vegetables every year to stop diseases spreading.



Further Information

The Australian Vegetable Book - Clive Blazey
Natural Gardening in Australia - Jeffrey Hodges
City of Darebin's Sow What When Seed Planting Guide

Sustainable Gardening in Darebin

BUSHFOODS

Bushfoods are edible Australian native plants and are a great way to grow foods that are suited to our local environment. Here are some common bushfoods you can grow at home:



Murnong / Yam daisy

A perennial which produces a yellow dandelion-like flower and dies down to a tuber over summer. The white tuberous roots are edible raw or baked and the bitter leaves can be added to salads. Likes rich loamy soil, a well-drained position in full sun.



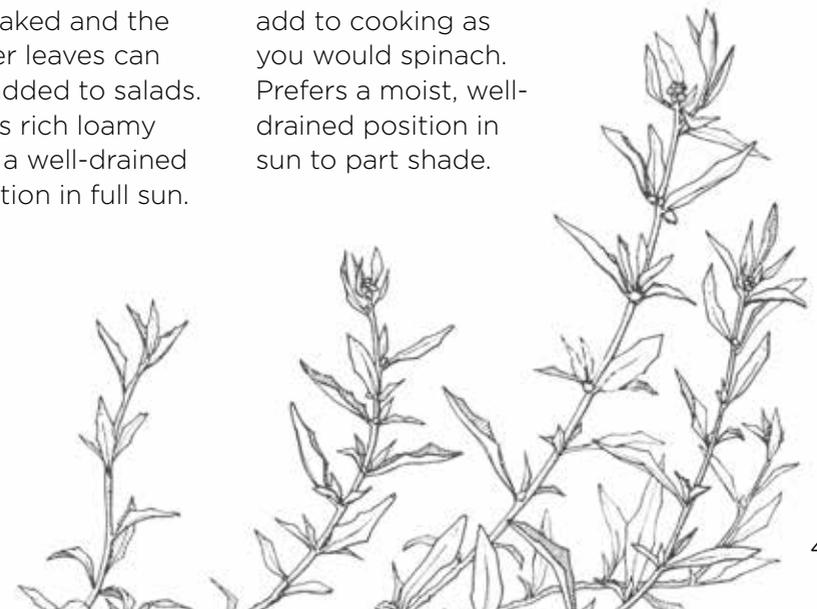
Warrigal greens

A vigorous groundcover producing edible leaves that are high in oxalic acid. Prepare by blanching leaves, discard water and add to cooking as you would spinach. Prefers a moist, well-drained position in sun to part shade.



Coastal saltbush

An evergreen shrub that grows to 1.5m. Leaves can be eaten fresh in salads or cooked. Drought tolerant and does not like over-watering.





Pigface

A prostrate creeping succulent that is salt and wind tolerant. Great for around pools, hanging baskets, rock gardens or as a ground cover. Likes a well-drained spot with full sun to part shade and grows easily from stem cuttings. Prune in winter.



Lemon Myrtle

A small tree used in cuisine and as a healing plant. Leaves have a lovely lemon scent which can be used to make delicious teas, or dried and ground to add to shortbread and cakes. Prefers a partly shaded protected position.



River mint

An edible and medicinal herb. Can be used fresh or dried in cooking or made into tea for coughs, colds and stomach cramps. Leaves can be rubbed on the skin as an insect repellent. A great plant for a damp, shady position. Best controlled in a pot.



Finger lime

A thorny tree that grows to 2-3m. There are many cultivars with a diversity in taste and fruit colours ranging from green, yellow, black, purple or red, which ripen winter through to spring. The caviar-like fruit is delicious in drinks, deserts or garnishes. Like all citrus, finger limes like well-drained soil with a pH of 6 to 7.

CERES Bushfoods Nursery ceres.org.au

CHEMICAL FREE GARDENING

Pesticides and fertilisers can move from our garden to the natural environment. Sprays can drift in the wind and powders can wash into waterways. Strong chemicals can kill our native insects, plants and animals.

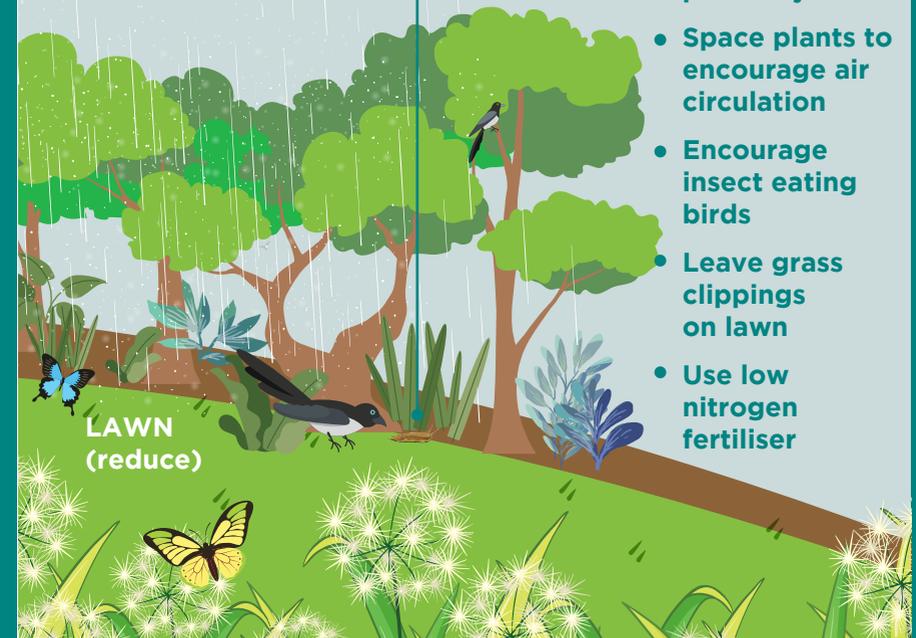
Too much fertiliser can put extra nutrients in our waterways and result in blue-green algae growing out of control and harming animals and sometimes people.

Reducing chemical use

Don't spray / sprinkle chemicals on a windy day or before rain

Identify the problem

- Don't over fertilise your plants
- Target spray pest only
- Space plants to encourage air circulation
- Encourage insect eating birds
- Leave grass clippings on lawn
- Use low nitrogen fertiliser



REASONS TO HAVE A CHEMICAL FREE GARDEN

1

Many insects in the garden such as ladybirds are “good guys” that will hunt and eat pests such as aphids. If you spray lots of chemicals in your garden you will also kill these beneficial insects and make your pest problem harder to control. Multi sprays in particular kill anything they touch.

2

Too much fertiliser makes plants produce a lot of leafy growth that often becomes a target for pests.

3

Organic fertilisers such as compost, manures, seaweed and fish emulsion break down more slowly than synthetic (chemical) fertilisers and generally match the rate at which plants need the nutrients. Synthetic fertilisers break down quickly and can ‘burn’ plant roots.

4

Organic fertilisers improve the soil structure meaning the soil is better able to hold water and make it available to plants. Synthetic fertilisers add nothing to the soil structure and tend to move easily from the soil after heavy rain or watering.

5

Check the SGA ‘Safe for you ‘n’ Nature’ for low environmental impact products.’ for low environmental impact products.

www.sgaonline.org.au

NATURAL PEST MANAGEMENT IN YOUR VEGGIE PATCH

Even a healthy garden may attract a range of pests which can be a nuisance to the food gardener. Natural pest management is a method of controlling pests without the use of harmful chemicals.

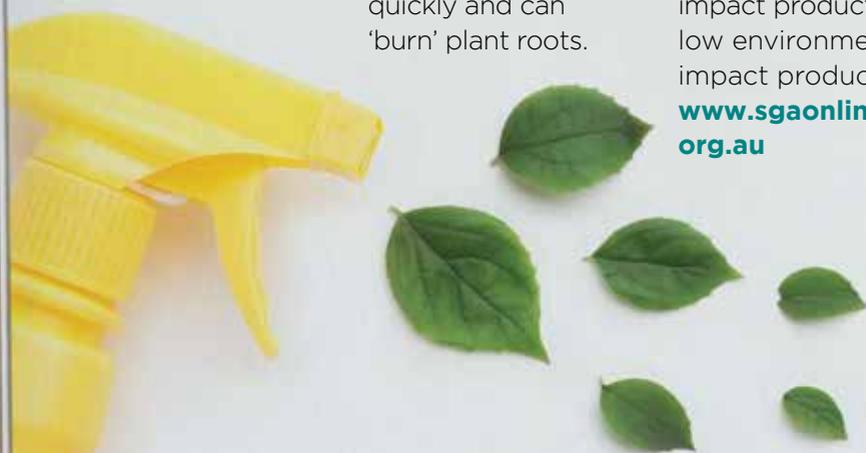
Healthy plants are resilient plants, while stressed and unhealthy plants are more susceptible to pests and diseases. Promote plant health by starting with a good garden design and plant selection that matches your conditions. Regularly add organic matter like compost, animal manure or worm castings to create healthy soil.

Plants require good air movement and access to sunlight as pests and diseases thrive in high humidity. Pruning, training and good site selection all contribute to improved air circulation.

Practice good garden hygiene and be careful about what you bring into your garden. If you have been in an area with known pest or diseases then clean your clothes and shoes before wearing them in your garden to prevent contamination. Sanitise tools with methylated spirits.

Some garden bugs might be useful predators of common pests, such as ladybirds, parasitic wasps, hoverflies, spiders and lacewings. To encourage beneficial insects: grow plants with small flowers (like alyssum, calendula and daisies) or umbelliferous flowers (like parsley and yarrow).

Try companion planting, and plant aromatic herbs, such as oregano and rosemary, amongst your vegetables to encourage biodiversity and disguise their scent from pests, or plant pest prone vegetables amongst different plants to hide their foliage.



When seedlings are young you might need to check for snails, slugs and caterpillars as a small plant can be eaten very quickly. Hand remove or go out at night and drown snails in a bucket of saltwater. Beer traps work well with slugs. Try making DIY plant guards out of large plastic bottles by removing the lid and bottom, and place over seedlings to protect them. Cabbage moths have been known to be territorial and fake cabbage moth 'decoys' near your brassicas can be effective. You can download a template from www.darebinfoodharvestnetwork.org.au. You can also try homemade garlic and chilli sprays.

You are on your way to a sustainable garden if you:

- Check your garden regularly for pest outbreaks
- Know exactly what pest or disease you are trying to control
- Use homemade sprays over chemical pesticides and herbicides
- Plant flowers that attract beneficial insects to your garden.
- Use organic fertilisers (compost, manure, seaweed and fish emulsions)
- Don't over-fertilise your plants as it produces excessive plant growth and excess green waste from additional pruning
- Can name three common types of pests you might find in your garden



Citrus Gall Wasp

Citrus gall wasp is a common pest causing significant damage to citrus trees across Darebin. These small black wasps lay eggs into the bark of soft stems in Spring, causing tissue to form around the larvae which swells to develop into a characteristic gall.

Traditional advice for controlling citrus gall wasp has been to prune trees of gall in late winter / early spring. However this method encourages new growth in spring, which creates ideal conditions when the wasp emerges and repeats their cycle. New advice is to shave galls back using a sharp knife or potato peeler to expose and kill larvae.

Save our Citrus Melbourne provides education and awareness about Citrus Gall Wasp. www.bluebeegardendesign.com.au/save-our-citrus

Another organic treatment method involves spraying kaolin clay twice during the citrus gall wasp emergence period, which starts in October. This disrupts the laying of eggs.

Avoid over-feeding with high nitrogen fertiliser in late winter / early spring. Burn any prunings and do not put prunings in your green waste bin as this can spread the pest. Talk to your neighbours and get them to treat their citrus too, so that you don't get re-infested by the neighbour's wasps flying over the fence.





More information at:
[www.sgaonline.org.au/
preventing-spread-of-
the-queensland-fruit-fly/](http://www.sgaonline.org.au/preventing-spread-of-the-queensland-fruit-fly/)

Queensland Fruit Fly

Queensland fruit fly (QFF) is a serious pest for home gardeners, hobby farmers and commercial fruit growers. QFF lays their eggs in many common fruits and vegetables, making the flesh rot and leaving them inedible. Adult QFF are about seven millimetres long and are reddish-brown in colour, with distinct yellow markings.



To prevent QFF from getting established in your area, you can use:

- bait sprays or gel onto the trunk and foliage to attract and kill QFF
- netting, bags or sleeves to stop female QFF from laying eggs inside fruit
- traps to monitor fruit fly activity

If you find fruit fly affected fruit on your property, boil or place all the affected fruit in a double lined plastic bag, leave it in the sun for a week to kill larvae, then put in the general waste bin. It should NOT be put in the food and green waste recycling bin or compost as the composting process is not guaranteed to kill the fruit fly larvae and there remains the risk of spreading fruit fly to other areas.

Further Information

Bug: The Ultimate Gardener's Guide to Organic Pest Control – Tim Marshall
Natural Control of Garden Pests – Jackie French
What Garden Pest or Disease is That? – Judy McMaugh

www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds

GET INVOLVED

One of the great joys of growing food is the abundant harvest season. Preserve your produce for leaner harvest times by learning to pickle, ferment, bottle or freeze your homegrown produce. You can share it with your family, friends and neighbours, or list them on your local Good Karma Network www.goodkarmaeffect.com.

You can also swap your excess for other home garden produce at your local food swap.

These are informal community gatherings where you can meet your neighbours and trade fruit, vegetables, herbs, seeds, cuttings, preserves, recipes, garden resources, kombucha scobies and other homemade goodies. To find your closest food swap, visit Darebin Food Harvest Network www.darebinfoodharvestnetwork.org.au or www.transitiondarebin.org



PERMACULTURE GARDEN DESIGN AND SUPPORT

Permaculture is an integrated sustainable design system that aims to create environments and landscapes that mimic natural patterns and energy flows in cooperation with nature to produce food, fibre and energy. There are three guiding ethics that guide decision making: People Care, Fair Share and Earth Care.

Permablitzes are community working bees to design edible gardens, share permaculture and sustainable living skills and build local community networks of gardeners helping each other.
www.permablitz.net

CERES runs a number of sustainable gardening and permaculture courses and workshops to help you grow and process food.
www.CERES.org.au/education



PLANTING NATURE STRIPS

Communal gardening can also take place on nature strips provided Council's guidelines are followed. Find Darebin's Nature Strip Planting Guidelines and complete a Nature Strip Planting Application Form here:
www.darebin.vic.gov.au/environment



COMMUNITY GARDENS

If you don't have enough space for a veggie patch at home you could consider joining your local community garden. To find one close to you, visit the Darebin Food Harvest Network website's community garden map:
www.darebinfoodharvestnetwork.org.au

Some community gardens have a wait list. If you want to start a new one, two resources are available to get you started:

Communal Food Garden Assessment Guidelines

Outlines the process and responsibilities of both the applicant and Council when assessing a site for a community garden

Communal Food Garden Site Assessment Checklist

Can help you assess the suitability of a potential site.

You can find both documents here:
www.darebin.vic.gov.au/environment

3000acres are a not-for-profit that helps community groups plan and establish new community garden and composting projects around Melbourne. They have a guide to starting new community gardens on their website, and can assist the community with free information and advice.
www.3000acres.org.au

You are on your way to a sustainable garden if you:

- Grow your own organic herbs, vegetables or fruits
- Preserve or swap your excess harvest
- Plant flowers to attract pollinators and beneficial insects

Further Information

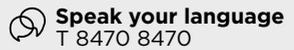
Permaculture One - David Holmgren and Bill Mollison
Introduction to Permaculture - Bill Mollison
Earth User's Guide to Permaculture - Rosemary Morrow
RetroSuburbia - David Holmgren
Backyard Self-Sufficiency - Jackie French

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If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service.



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