

WATER WISE GARDENING

South Africa is a dry country and water is a dwindling source. As the demand for this precious resource increases, so does its price. Many people over-water their gardens, consuming between 30% and 50% of the total domestic water ... just to maintain a garden.

Water wise gardening cuts down on this waste while still preserving the beauty and diversity of a garden. By gardening in this way one creates a garden for the future, a sustainable garden. It becomes a way of life and not just an emergency measure!



Creating a WATER WISE garden:

- **Improve the soil's water retention** – add compost.
Compost holds water in sandy soil, helps aeration and retention in clayey soil and provides valuable nutrients for the plants.
- **Reconsider your lawns** – they guzzle water!
Maybe pave areas of lawn which are used as pathways already. Strips of lawn may look better as flower beds. Do not cut the lawn too short in the growing periods. Ask the horticulturalists at Starke Ayres Garden Centre which grasses require less water.
- **Irrigate correctly** – at times of low evaporation (early morning or late afternoon).
Do not irrigate when it rains; too much water results in shallow root growth and fungal attacks. Sprinklers are not ideal for water wise gardening; consider a drip irrigation which delivers water directly onto soil above the roots (this also prevents water loss through evaporation). Mulch wherever possible to retain the moisture.
- **Use indigenous plants** – our local flora is well-adapted to our climate.
More often than not indigenous vegetation consists of hardy species, requiring little water and pampering. These plants are already water wise so gear your garden up for the future and **GO INDIGENOUS!**
- **Group wisely** – place plants with similar water requirements in the same beds. Most plants require a decent amount of water while establishing, but water wise plants can receive a dramatic decrease in water after this period. South Africa has a huge diversity of water wise plants so do not hesitate to contact Starke Ayres Garden Centre to find out which water wise plants will best suit your garden.

Adapted from: SANA pamphlet *Water Wise Gardening*.