

Seven Principles of a *Great Garden*

With the increasing pressures facing gardeners and landscape managers to use less water, to be more careful with fertilisers and to be more environmentally responsible there is a challenge for the way deal with our landscapes.

The *Great Gardens* program has been designed to harness the latest and the best available information and strategies to assist in the creation of this 'new breed' of gardens. Set out below are the major principles by which you can assess the sustainability of your garden and see whether you have created or are well on the way to creating your own *Great Garden*.

Principle One:

Garden designed taking account of local climate, site features and soils.

Only by carefully working out the different characteristic of your own site can you be in a position to "*put the right plants and features in the right place for the right reasons*". You may find, for instance, that you have sandy soils over the whole site, 5 different 'microclimates' on the property and constraints such as a long narrow boundary, shady area in front of the house and large west facing wall. All these factors when carefully considered can help you ensure that the garden works because your choices and gardening decisions are well informed and based on solid information.

Principle Two:

Garden should have at plants grouped according to 'hydrozones'.

'Hydrozones' are the various areas of your garden that require different watering regimes. For instance you would group all of your 'water guzzlers' together and in a protected area, so that they can have their own more intensive and effective watering system.

Drought tolerant plants would dominate the garden and would be grouped together with their own less intensive watering system.

Principle Three:

Garden should be dominated by waterwise/drought tolerant plants, or is being transformed into one that is.

This is an essential component of a Great Garden. There are so many wonderful plants available that fit within this category *and if carefully chosen and managed will within one year be virtually beyond the need for summer watering!*

It will be important to ensure that any waterwise plants chosen, that are not local natives have been screened to ensure they have minimal weed potential. This mean choosing hybrids and ensuring that the nursery the plant are purchased from is accredited with the NGIWA and the Water Corporation.

Principle Four:

The Garden has the latest water efficient irrigation and at least some subsurface irrigation.

A *Great Garden* will be a model for water efficient irrigation. It will have little of no evidence of watering, no runoff and will be controlled so that it only comes on when the soil moisture level indicated watering is necessary. 'Grey Water' will be an important component of this system and will provide valuable summer/autumn water supplies.

Principle Five:

Gardens will use and incorporate mulch into all garden beds.

The garden will display the best quality (and the cheapest) mulch – street tree prunings. These will be carefully added to all beds at least once a year to maintain soil health, reduce evaporation and suppress winter weeds.

Where ever possible garden and kitchen waste will be recycled and turned into compost for the garden.

Principle Six:

The lawn areas will be minimised and will only be put in when they serve a purpose for the household.

All lawn areas will be carefully managed to minimise water and fertiliser use and maintained through the use of where ever possible organic management principles. Lawn areas will be:

Sown or laid with drought tolerant species such as velvet buffalo, lippia

Soil will be amended first with soil amendments and slow release organic additives to ensure the soil holds onto water and nutrients more effectively.

Lawn or lawn alternatives will be set up and maintained using slow or controlled release, broad spectrum fertiliser, applied at the recommended rates and when the plants are actively growing.

Lawns should be irrigated where ever possible with sub surface systems and at all times, and from all sources, watering regimes must follow the water restriction guidelines.

Once established lawns should be maintained using Phosphorus free fertiliser, they should be de-thatched, de-compacted at least once every two years and high quality wetting agents should be applied (if needed) at least 4 times a year.

Principle Seven:

Integrated Pest, weed and disease management strategies (IPM) will be adopted in the garden.

This will mean that any problems in the garden will controlled by ensuring that:

Through organic management of the soil, planting of a range of local plants and increasing garden diversity the biodiversity of the garden improves thus helping to provide 'natural control'.

A range of control and management measures will be used providing an integrated management system, this will be based where ever possible on a sound understanding of the life cycle and causes of the particular problem.

Where ever possible low toxic environmentally friendly chemicals will be used.

Toxic chemicals will be an absolute last resort.