

Hot Tips for designing your drought proof garden



Great Gardens

Doing it right first up...

1. Get yourself an aerial perspective...

You can use graph paper and accurately sketch out your block and include the house and all other existing features. Your title papers will have a scaled outline of your block which can be a great starting point. Or you maybe able to access an aerial photo program to get a good photo of your property. Either way the aerial perspective is the key first step

2. Get your bearings...

Mark on the sketch north, then east (where the hot dry winds come from), west and south. Identify shaded areas, views to keep, areas to screen, direction of howling winds etc.

3. Know your soils, know your climate...

This will be vital to ensure that your design is realistic and that you will chose plants and features that will thrive in your particular area, ie avoid the lush 'Bali look' or a show case of Azaeleas when you are 20m back from the beach!!

4. Mark in the key existing features...

This will include existing plants to be kept, paths, ponds, 'shadeprints' , taps, irrigation. Note whether they are to stay or go.

5. Identify and rate your microclimates...

Every property will have 4 -6 microcliamtes ranging from the mild and protected through to the harsh and exposed. Working out which is where and assigning each its appropriate 'rating' is the foundation of a beautiful drought proof garden and should guide you in deciding what components go where in your garden. Typical 'microclimates' and their ratings include:

Microclimate type	Rating (1 mild - 5 very harsh/exposed)	Suitable Hydrozone type (one drop; two drop; or three drop plants)	Examples of suitable plants
Shaded garden section	1	3 drop plants	Eg Ferns, Azaleas, Gardenias
North portion	4-5	1 drop plants	Eg Dianellas, Eremophilas, Ficinia,
Southern portion	1-2	2-3 drop plants	Eg Roses, Petunias
East portion	2-3	1-2 drop plants	Eg Boronias, Scaevolias, vegies
North paved area	5	1 drop plants	Eg Acacias, Melaleuca, Banksia
Front verge	3-5	1-2 drop plants	Eg Groundcover Grevilleas, Hemiandra, Eremophila,
Exposed area	4-5	1 drop plants	Eg Hakea, Grevillea,
Paved area	4-5	1-2 drop plants	Eg Leucophyta, Olearia, Dianella

‘Macro’ design

Getting it right on the grand scale...

6. Mark in proposed ‘hard’ landscape additions...

This will include ponds, paving, gravel, stones or mulch areas, seating, gazebos, pergolas, shadesails, kids sand pit etc. Many of these can help to not only reduce water use but make your home naturally cooler in summer and warmer in winter!!

7. Mark in your proposed ‘soft’ landscape additions according to your microclimates...

This will include any lawn areas (shouldn’t exceed 30% of the garden area), groundcovers, shrubs, trees (deciduous or evergreen) pots and

annuals. Taking care to match your plants (One Drop; Two Drop or Three Drop to the most appropriate Microclimate)

'Micro' design

Fine tune the designs...

8. Give your hard landscaping its features...

Think about the shape of these features (eg swirls, straight) and the types of products you will use in these features (eg crushed brick, street tree mulch) as well as patterns (grid, sweeping) and features contained within eg sculptures, logs, pots.

9. Let your creativity loose on your garden designs...

For each garden bed think about the species you will use and how they will 'fit' together and the patterns of layout eg 'the grandstand effect' (smallest to the tallest), clumping numbers, contrasts of colors, spread of flowering times, size and height and spread. Do they need to tolerate shade, reflective heat from paving etc.

10. Think about your irrigation...

Now your landscape design is in place think about how to irrigate it - sub surface and drippers for garden beds, 'grey water' for lawns, fruit trees, sub surface or MP rotators for lawn areas.

11. Who can help me implement my wonderful plan?

There is a wealth of people, services and products out there that can turn a daunting plan into a easily implemented dreamscape. What nurseries should you go to, irrigation company should you use, soil supplier should you trust and maybe should you consider a garden designer to check off the plan?

Plenty of this information will be available through the Water Corporation and or www.greatgardens.info

12. Your plan of attack...

What to do when. So much of successful landscaping is about putting the right feature, in the right place at the right time.

