



## SEDIMENT TASK FORCE - FOR RESIDENTS

WATER-WISE GARDENS ARE ALSO "SEDIMENT-WISE"



Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions



SWAN CANNING  
RIVERPARK



# Water-wise Gardens are also “Sediment-wise”

## How does a water-sensitive garden help stop sediment loss?

While building developments are the primary focus of the Sediment Task Force, soil erosion and sediment runoff can also happen in your garden!

Sediment in a gardening context includes topsoil, sub-surface soils, sand, silt, mud and organic matter – all of which needs to be prevented from leaving your garden so it doesn’t cause water pollution.

## A water-sensitive garden holds onto your soil

In our region, planning a water-sensitive garden involves using drought tolerant native plants or ground covers. If possible, try and use ‘endemic’ species, local to your area. These species have adapted to Australian conditions over thousands of years. They have extensive root systems to hold the dirt and nutrients and bind them together in the soil, so they don’t wash away.

Some councils provide free or subsidised native plants to local residents, so get in touch with your local government.

**Remember** – For the best chance of success, we recommend planting from seedlings sourced in a local nursery. These have the highest chance of success in your garden. *Please don’t take wild plants from their natural habitat as fines do apply.*

## A water-sensitive garden maintains soil quality

Poor quality topsoil (i.e. water repellent, low in organic matter, poor drainage, soil acidity), can lead to poor soil structure. Waterwise gardens are more likely to have good quality topsoil and are less prone to erosion.

Soil preparation and soil improvements have a big impact on the success of plantings. If your plants do not survive, the soil you have prepared can be washed away by rain or blown by the wind.

Use mulch and add organic matter to your soil and depending on your soil type, also clay-based additives on a regular basis to prevent this.

Use compost (make your own from your food scraps and garden waste), and when buying additives or garden supplies, look for Waterwise or Smart Approved WaterMark products where possible.

## Less watering means less chance of sediment runoff

Local native species need much less water than introduced plant species and turf as they are adapted to the local climate. Less extensive watering is needed, which helps keep soil in place for your plants to thrive.

**Water wisely** - Hand water or use a soaker hose or micro-sprinkler that slowly drips into the soil at the plants roots. If you are installing irrigation, use sub-strata (under mulch) drip irrigation to prevent soil runoff.

## How do I design my garden if I want it to be water and sediment-wise?

If well designed and properly managed, you can improve your garden’s water efficiency and increase its ability to absorb rainfall, helping prevent soil erosion and sediment runoff.

Design your garden to hold rain in a heavy rainfall event, so sediment from your garden is not transported into street stormwater drains. Gardens built on steep slopes may need landscaping (e.g. building a wall at the bottom of the slope to capture sediment). Captured soil is a resource that can go straight back onto your garden.

If you are removing large amounts of turf to plant a garden (or vegetable plot), **you should be ready to plant and mulch immediately or take steps to prevent soil erosion until you're ready to plant.** You can use temporary, non-seeding cover crops such as clover, peas, cereals and forage grasses (e.g. rye grass) to prevent soil erosion. Planting a cover crop will also increase organic matter, prevent weeds from taking over the garden, and add nutrients to the soil.

Erosion control mats can also be used to help hold water and keep soil in place.

If you have soil pathways around your garden plants, replace them with pavers or pervious/permeable pavement or gravel to prevent soil runoff.

## What about mulch?

Mulches are typically wood or bark chips, leaves, straw, nut shells, or small gravel. Mulch prevents weeds and keeps your soil in your garden.

Mulch can also be used *instead* of having bare ground (an erosion hazard) or lawn (which requires watering).

However, you need to ensure that your mulch is also stable, and won't wash into gutters and drains as this will block up stormwater drains. Some fertilisers can also stick to mulch, posing a pollution risk to our wetlands and rivers.

## What if I only have lawn?

Follow the above advice regarding soil quality and watering and aerate your lawn/grass in the spring - soil compaction can also cause erosion if water cannot be absorbed. If you have clay soil, consider aerating again later in the year.

## Should I use herbicides to control weeds?

Spraying all your garden weeds with herbicides at once can affect soil retention in your garden as those invasive root systems die and can no longer hold on to the soil. Loose soil or sand can be easily blown by wind or washed by rain onto roads and into drains, where it makes its way into wetlands or rivers, causing pollution.

Staged weed control helps to stabilise the soil and slow down the water flow. Delay spraying summer weeds on your verge until there is at least 50% cover, and plant as soon as possible. Seek advice on timing of later weed control.

## What about my verge?

Some Local Governments in Western Australia encourage residents to undertake soft landscaping of verges, including water-sensitive plants and mulch. They often provide advice and can even provide incentives such as free native plants or mulch and/or have a rebate scheme if you create a native plants Waterwise verge. Check with your Local Government first for more information.

## Further Information

Specific site erosion and sediment control measures may be required to be installed by your builder or garden landscaper to ensure compliance with individual Local Government Authority's Local Laws. Contact your Local Government website or enquiry line.

### You (and your Builders/Landscaper) can find out more at:

[Sediment Task Force Resources \(including Builder's Checklist\)](#)

[Waterwise \(Water Corporation\)](#)

[Creating a Waterwise Verge \(Water Corporation\)](#)

Or visit your local Waterwise Garden Centre.



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