

Creating a Sustainable

A sustainable garden is one that will give you back your time - time that allows you and your kids to enjoy your outdoor space. Your weekends won't be taken up with mowing, pruning, raking or managing pests and spraying weeds. It will also save you money. You won't need to spend money on replacing plants that fail, or buy harmful chemicals to treat pests and weeds and maintenance costs will be minimal.

Plants

A common request I get from prospective clients is for a low maintenance garden. One of the simplest ways of achieving this goal is to select the right plants. If you have a garden that's full of deciduous trees, roses, box hedge and annuals then you will spend many hours in the garden maintaining, watering and feeding

it. If you don't want to spend every weekend pruning then choose plants that will grow naturally to the size and shape you want and are well suited to your area and soil. Similarly if you loath raking up the leaves in autumn then go with evergreen trees. The most sustainable option for plant choice is to use native plants that are indigenous to your area. Most local municipalities have an indigenous plant nursery that can provide advice and supply plants. Next time it comes to replacing an annual in the garden, consider a native option.

Pest, disease and weed control

Not every pest, disease or weed requires chemical intervention. Pests can be kept at bay by attracting birds to the garden. Natives such as flowering gums, callistemons and grevilleas are great for this. Diseases can be minimised by planting the right plant in the right place. Weeds can be managed with a good layer of mulch or planting a ground cover that restricts weed growth.

In the event that pests, disease or weeds do appear in the garden, then the first option should be to remove them manually. Pests can also be managed using non-chemical means such as barriers, insect traps or companion planting with plants that deter the pest. Diseases can be minimised by planting in the best position for the plant and using optimal planting techniques.

A couple of excellent ways to kill weeds (without running for the spray bottle of weedicide) are with boiling water or a mix of salt and vinegar.



Garden

by Noni Young

Watering

All plants will require some augmented watering from time to time, especially when first planted to get them established. Selecting drought tolerant plants for your garden will help to minimise water usage over the longer term. Native plants are a great option as well as plants of Mediterranean origin are also well suited to our climate and soils and have great drought tolerance.

Mulching

A good layer (50mm) of organic mulch is critical to a sustainable garden. It will reduce water use, manage weeds and improve the quality of the soil.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Some simple tips to adopt this strategy in the garden:

Reduce rubbish by composting kitchen and garden waste and other compostable items such as paper. Reuse the compost on the garden beds and vege patch.

Collect rain water and/or grey water to use on the garden.

Go for reclaimed or recycled landscaping materials, such as reclaimed bricks, recycled plastic sleepers and reconstituted plastic/timber composite for decking.