

Tips for a Low Maintenance Garden

by Noni Young

Want a wonderful garden but don't have the time to maintain it? Unfortunately no garden is 'no maintenance' but here are some tips for having a great looking garden without having to spend every waking hour keeping it that way.

PLANTS

Choose plants that are suitable for your area and microclimate. Native and indigenous plants are ideal.

Choose drought tolerant plants that require little watering once established.

Prune plants in the winter months to encourage good spring growth. This will also help to reduce the risk of pests and disease.

MULCH

Keep the garden beds well mulched. This will save time by reducing weeds and the need for watering.

Recycle lawn clippings and green waste back onto the garden as composted mulch. This will do wonders for improving the soil and the vitality of the plants.

LAWNS

Lawns can be high maintenance as they require regular mowing, feeding, weeding and trimming.

Consider limiting the lawn in your garden and using alternatives, such as soft fall mulch, in play areas.

Use a drought tolerant, warm season grass such as soft-leaf buffalo.

Mow the lawn on a high setting. This slows the growth rate which means less mowing over time.

WATERING

Install a good quality automated irrigation system that delivers water when and where you need it. Infrequent (1-2 times per week) and deep watering is best for plants during the establishment phase (first 3 months). This will encourage good root development and reduce the need for artificial irrigation once the plants are established.

DESIGN ELEMENTS

Your choice of landscape materials and other design elements in the garden can also impact on maintenance requirements.

Water features are a popular choice in the modern garden but can be high maintenance. Water needs to be topped up in dry months. Pumps require regular maintenance to ensure filters are clear and the pump is working optimally. Fish need feeding.

Timber decking requires annual staining/oiling to protect the timber. A low maintenance alternative would be reconstituted decking made from recycled plastic. Similarly, recycled plastic sleepers and garden edging will survive the elements a lot longer than their timber alternatives and require little or no maintenance.



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