

Make every drop count – tips for the home gardener

A typical Melbourne home uses between 240,000 and 270,000 litres of water annually and approximately 25 per cent of this is used on the garden.

There are a number of ways you can make every drop count in watering your garden. Why not try following some of these tips?

- **Group together plants with similar water requirements** to help prevent over- or under-watering.
- **Apply and maintain shallow layers of mulch** to improve the long-term water-holding capacity of the soil and restrict weeds. For the right type and amount to apply, consult your garden adviser.
- **Water deeply (and infrequently) between 8pm and 10am** to minimize evaporation from the soil, transpiration from plants and to improve effective root depth.
- **Get to know your garden and its various water needs** by choosing plants that are suited to the 'local' conditions in your garden.
- **Improve the water-holding capacity of your soil** by building up new garden beds with well-composted, fine organic matter and regularly mulching established garden beds.
- **Good maintenance keeps a dry garden in great condition** Regularly check for pests and diseases, and keep your garden weed free. Ensure that your sprinkler system is operating efficiently.
- **Consider using drought-tolerant grasses.** They use up to 30% less water than cool-season grasses but **choose your grass carefully** to avoid the potential spread of weeds. Check out our website for further information and consult your local nursery for advice on suitable grasses.



Permanent Water Saving Rules

Unless an exemption is granted, all gardeners should observe Melbourne's Permanent Water Saving Rules. These Rules apply to both public and private gardens.

- **Manual watering systems** (that you turn on or off by hand) can only be used between **8pm and 10am**, any day of the week.
- **Automatic watering systems** (that are set to turn on and off automatically) can only be used **between 10pm and 10am**, any day of the week. All systems installed since 1 September 2005 must be fitted with a rain or soil moisture sensor.
- Every hand-held hose must be fitted with a trigger nozzle. With it you can wash your car, and water your garden and lawn at any time.

RBG Melbourne complies with Melbourne's Permanent Water Saving Rules. The only variation, for practical reasons, is that RBG Melbourne irrigates between 8pm and 8am rather than 10pm to 10am. Our government water retailer has approved this variation.

For a full set of the Permanent Water Saving Rules, please visit www.ourwater.vic.gov.au or contact your government water retailer:

City West Water 131 691

South East Water 131 867

Yarra Valley Water 131 721

Further information about water conservation can also be found on the internet at:

www.rbg.vic.gov.au (Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne website)

www.southeastwater.com.au

www.savewater.com.au

www.irrigation.org.au



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every drop counts
water conservation at the
Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne



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Nymphaea sp.

Why we water – protecting our heritage

RBG Melbourne is widely recognised as one of the world's finest botanic gardens. Established in 1846, there are now 10,000 species and over 52,000 individual plants in the living collection, including plants of great cultural and natural value. Many of these plants are irreplaceable, some even endangered or extinct in the wild. It is important that the survival of these plants is guaranteed by an adequate water supply.

In addition, the cultural significance of RBG Melbourne is recognised by listings on the Register of Heritage Victoria and the Register of the National Estate, and is classified by the National Trust of Australia (Vic.).

Leading the way in water conservation

Since 1995, RBG Melbourne has led the way in water conservation for large landscapes.

In this time, RBG Melbourne has reduced its water consumption by 60 per cent.

This has been achieved through the implementation of a number of strategies including: staff training; a more efficient automatic irrigation system; extensive mulching of garden beds; and the use of warm-season grasses.



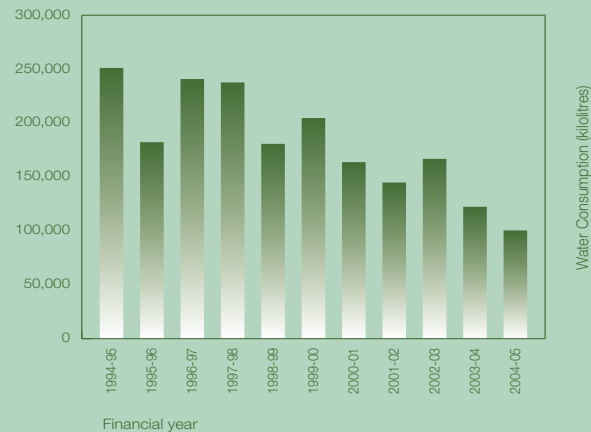
RBG Melbourne continues to explore the viability of establishing alternative water supplies. Investigations to date have not found a sustainable and alternative water source to potable or 'mains' water. The Ornamental Lake, although it appears large, is relatively shallow and is not a viable alternative at this stage. It is hoped that with improvements in technology in the future, this and other water sources may become available.

In the meantime, we continue to make every drop count.

The Automatic Irrigation System

The introduction of an Automatic Irrigation System in the mid-1990s has allowed the Gardens to move from a regime of manual watering to a more efficient watering system that considers plant needs, soil water-holding capacity, climatic conditions and plant root depths.

Total Irrigation Water Use at RBG Melbourne



Leading the way in garden design – Water Conservation Garden and Long Island

As well as seeking ways to water the traditional Victorian landscapes of the Gardens more efficiently, RBG Melbourne uses water-sensitive design principles in all new landscape areas.

The Water Conservation Garden (Gardens Guide map reference no. 9) requires 50 per cent less water than is normally applied to other well-managed irrigated beds in the Gardens. This has been achieved through the careful selection of trees, shrubs, grasses and groundcovers that are naturally adapted to dry conditions.

Similarly, the recent establishment of the Long Island (Gardens Guide map reference no. 11) collection of locally occurring indigenous plant communities resulted in a 70–80 per cent reduction in water use during its establishment compared with other equivalent areas in the Gardens. Long Island now only requires very minimal irrigation.

Both of these gardens have been recognised by the Victorian *Savewater Awards*: the Water Conservation Garden in the 2003 Sustainable Garden, Garden Design category and Long Island in the 2004 Garden Design/Construction category.

Careful plant selection is important in garden design. The Grey, Arid and Californian Gardens also display plants suitable for Melbourne's climate. (Check the Gardens Guide for locations.)

Working together with South East Water

The redevelopment of the Water Conservation Garden as well as recent improvements to the effectiveness of the RBG Melbourne irrigation system were sponsored by our government water retailer, South East Water, with whom we enjoy a longstanding and beneficial relationship. The Royal Botanic Gardens continues to work in partnership with South East Water to ensure the sustainable use of water resources and the communication of shared water conservation measures.

