

10 Top Water Conservation Tips for Summer/Dry Gardens

1. **Keep the soil in great shape.** Adding in compost not only improves the soil structure and provides nutrients and aeration, but increases its water retention properties.
2. **Mulch. Mulch. Mulch.** Makes a huge difference to dry gardens. A good layer of mulch, at least 10 cm deep will help moderate the soil temperature, keep the garden moist, control erosion and prevent weed growth. It doesn't matter what you choose to use; bark, woodchips, stones, even crushed shells. Whatever suits your aesthetics and budget.
3. **Choose Your Plants Wisely.** By considering the environment that you live in you will save yourself money by not buying and planting things that will only become stressed and/or die. Ask around at nurseries or garden centres and look at other local gardens. What works for them?
4. **Water Wisely.** Keep plants that have similar watering needs grouped together. Water early in the morning (before 9am) when it is cooler to avoid unnecessary evaporation and burning of leaves. Water on calm days to prevent wind drift and evaporation.
5. **Water Where Needed.** It seems obvious, but a lot of water is wasted with incorrect placement of hoses or sprinklers, or by hose watering of the upper leaves of plants. You will save yourself a lot of problems if you...
6. **Choose Smart Irrigation.** Sprinklers waste a lot of water, By using soaker hoses or drip irrigation systems you will be watering smarter. With sensible placement the water soaks right into the roots slowly where it is needed. If you do not have water restrictions in your town, great, soak away. If these do occur in your area you may need to look at...
7. **Rainwater Tanks.** An extra rainwater tank for your garden is just the job when water restrictions come into place or to save money on water if your water is metered. The amount of moisture that comes of the roof is quite amazing. It will cost a little to get a professional tank installed but you can get that back by putting in a nice vege garden. Otherwise do it yourself by directing your downspout into a barrel or other large container. Protect your water with a screen to keep out leaves, insects and to keep pets and other animals safe.
8. **Greywater Systems.** Laundry, kitchen and bathroom water are all wasted when they are flushed away. You can use them safely on your garden. Not on vegetable gardens though. If you have the money get a greywater tank installed, they are expensive but really good for the environment so definitely worth it. If you don't have the funds look at getting a greywater diverter. These attach to the outflow in your kitchen, laundry or bathroom and then use the soaker method to run through the garden. If you do use greywater systems then please be aware of the products that you are using. Choose garden-friendly products. These will be low in phosphorous and salt and will be biodegradable. In New Zealand I would check out the EcoStore range of products. We use them at home and they're great. www.ecostore.co.nz If you are bleaching or washing items such as nappies, turn your greywater diverter off.
9. **Water Storage for Hard to Reach Areas.** For areas that are hard to reach e.g. gardens down driveways, set up rainwater storage. At home we use some very large round plastic tanks that we also keep our water lily's in. An empty one here and there soon fills up with rainwater and we bucket it on when times are dry.
10. **Limit lawn area.** A dry, patchy lawn can be quite distressing for some people. If it is going to be wasteful or impractical to keep these areas watered in the summer months then consider lessening the area. You are better off with a nice paved or gravelled area that requires no attention. Put some nice containers with plants to keep the area looking green. Containers come into their own in summer and are easy to keep watered. Keep a tray underneath to conserve water.

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