

# Plan before planting

*Planning is the first step in creating a Water Wise garden. By spending time on planning your garden, you will save money, time and water.*



Getting to know your garden's special characteristics will help you to select the right plants for the different areas in your garden. A comprehensive garden design (Fig 1) will also assist you in ensuring your garden is Water Wise, by zoning specific areas in your garden correctly. Research has shown that if a landscaped is designed and thereby irrigated correctly, water usage can be reduced by up to 70%. Use the points below to carefully design your garden and make it Water Wise.

## ***Find out the following information by looking around your garden:***

- Does your area or suburb experience frost in winter? Is it severe (-8°C), moderate (-5°C) or mild (-2°C)?
- Does frost occur next to the north-facing wall of your house? Usually, this particular area in the garden is warmer than the rest of the garden.
- Where are the sunniest areas? How long does the sun shine there each day? Are some areas sunny in the morning but shaded in the afternoon? Areas that receive sun in the afternoon tend to be particularly hot.
- Where are the shady areas? Is there dense shade all day, or does sunlight filter through trees?
- Do you have any slopes? How steep are they?
- Are there any spots where drainage is a problem and the soil is damp or boggy?
- Are there any attractive views that you want to keep or, alternatively, screen?

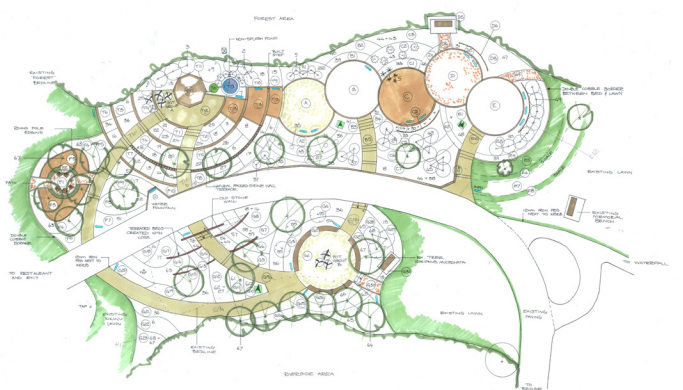


Fig 1. An elaborate garden design for Walter Sisulu National Botanical Gardens.

A scale plan drawn up on graph paper is the first step to a beautiful garden. Decide which areas of the garden to select for your different needs, such as:

- Entertainment.
- A swimming pool or water feature.
- Play space for children.

- A space for quiet contemplation.
- Growing vegetables.
- A wildlife habitat.
- Playing sport.
- Parking.
- An area for compost and other 'eyesores' such as washing lines, dustbins, garden sheds etc.

## ***Water-use zones***

Marking your Water Wise zones on your plan makes creating your Water Wise garden easy. Before you choose plants, make a note of plants that grow in different water-use zones. Next, decide and mark out on your map where the different water-use zones are most appropriate.

### **HIGH WATER-USE (10-30% of your garden area)**

- Lawns.
- Water-loving plants.
- Container plants.
- Plant examples include white arums, tree ferns, fuchsias and all winter flowering bulbs and annuals.

### **MODERATE WATER-USE (20-40% of your garden area)**

- Plants needing more water than is provided by the rainfall in your area.
- Some indigenous lawn.
- Plant examples include day lilies, roses, nandina, forest bell bush, hellebores and lamb's ear.

### **LOW WATER-USE (30-60% of your garden area)**

- Plants that thrive mainly on rainfall and need little, if any, watering during the summer months.
- Plant examples include Acacia, wild olive, river bush willow, plumbago, agapanthus and vygies.

### **NO WATER-USE (10-30% of your garden area)**

- Hardscaping (patios, paved areas, driveways).
- Established endemic indigenous trees, shrubs and grassed areas.
- This zone should be as large as possible.
- Hardy indigenous species, as well as succulents can be included in this zone.

There are many benefits to successful garden design. Besides adding beauty and a place to relax, a tranquil outdoor area helps purify and cool the air, as well as provides a natural water filter to protect water quality and the environment. Research shows that exposure to green space can also mitigate mental fatigue and stress. Happy designing!



For further information on being Water Wise® please visit [www.randwater.co.za](http://www.randwater.co.za) and click on the Water Wise logo or contact us on 0860 10 10 60.