

## Summer Gardening Jobs

Summer can be a difficult time for gardeners in WA with the long periods of hot days combined with the twice-a-week water restrictions. However, with careful plant choice, some preparation through the early weeks leading into it and clever use of some of the products available, summer can still be a productive and pleasant time of the gardening year.



In the garden, summer is all about enjoying the early mornings and late afternoons where the day is cooler and it is comfortable to be outdoors. So instead of heading out for a full day of hard work on a weekend, divide the jobs into bite size chunks that can be done in comfort. After all, as exercise goes, gardening is just as good and probably more enjoyable than a walk around the neighbourhood.

### Jobs in the Garden

- Check the reticulation to make sure that it is set for the correct days.
- Hand water vegetables, annuals and pots in the cooler parts of the day. It is actually one of the most enjoyable and relaxing jobs in the garden and a wonderful way to unwind after work.
- Move potted plants that prefer cool weather into more shaded spots in the garden such as under the verandah or a tree with dappled shade. Spray them with a leaf polymer to help protect them from the heat.
- The amount of water that the reticulation is putting onto the garden needs to be checked to make sure that it is even and enough for what the plant needs. It only takes a few hot days for dry patches to show up in lawn or a garden bed. To check, collect lots of straight sided containers such as ice cream buckets and place them evenly within the sprinkler zone. Run the zone and then check the evenness of the water level in each container. Aim for around 10 to 15mm of water though

this differs depending on the plants and soil. Remember that drippers put water out at different levels so will need to be on for a longer period of time.



- Apply seaweed extract fortnightly. It will help to thicken the cell walls of the plants so they can withstand the extreme heat more effectively.
- Apply a wetting agent to all garden beds, pots and lawn areas. Make sure that it has been watered in well as this is what will activate it. Although it may seem pricey, it is the only real way to make sure that the water from sprinklers will get to the roots in our very water repellent WA soils.
- Make sure that the compost heap isn't drying out. It needs to stay damp so that the materials actually break down and to prevent ants and cockroaches from moving in.
- Keep an eye on the pond and water features to make sure that the water level doesn't drop or that algae hasn't taken over in the strong sunlight.
- Don't do any hard pruning in the heat of summer, even if the leaves look yellow and sunburnt. These provide shade for the younger leaves underneath which, if exposed to the strong sun, will only burn anyway.
- Keep removing dead flowers as most summer bloomers will produce more if the old ones are removed.
- Lawns can be fed with a slow release lawn food as these won't burn if the weather is hot.
- Keep weeds under control so that they don't seed through the garden. Spray on a nice hot day as the plant will take it up more quickly making the chemical more effective.
- Mulch throughout the garden and even on the top of pots. Use Lucerne hay for the veggie patch but a chunky mulch for the rest of the garden. Mulch made from large pieces is more effective at allowing water through and retaining it in the soil. Remember to apply a fertiliser first and then a wetting agent over the top.
- Use tree branches or build temporary shade structures to provide sun shelter to vulnerable plants and vegetables.

- Spray extra-vulnerable plants with a product which coats the leaves with a polymer coating. This will help to reduce water loss from the leaves.
- Roses can be cut back quite hard but this must be followed by a good feed with a fertiliser to encourage new growth. They will be back in full bloom in autumn.
- Once agapanthus have ceased flowering, remove their flower heads before their seeds spread. These look fantastic in a floral arrangement.

## Problems in the Garden

Here are some of the problems to look out for in summer.

- Watch for fruit fly on tomatoes. Check out our "Controlling Fruit Fly" factsheet available on the Better Pets and Gardens website.
- Vegetable gardens and orchards are ideal for summer feeding by grasshoppers but they can be difficult to control without chemicals. Protecting with fine nets may be the best solution.
- Fungal problems such as mildew, brown rot, rust, blight, leaf spot and root rot thrive during warm, damp weather. Avoid watering from overhead and treat as soon as these diseases are seen.
- Rats and mice can be a problem in the veggie patch and can even chew the flowers off seedlings. Be vigilant about dealing with these and take their food source away by picking up any fallen fruit or vegetables.
- Keep an eye out for aphids in the veggie patch, especially on the flower heads of weeds.
- Watch out for armyworm caterpillars which will eat their way through lawns as well as curl grubs which damage grass roots. Both can be controlled fairly easily.
- Flies and mosquitoes can be a real problem in summer. To help control these, spray a residual insecticide on the outdoor walls, window ledges and timberwork. This will last several months and reduce the pest population.



## Better Advice

If pests and diseases do affect your plants, bring a sample into any Better Pets and Gardens and our staff will identify the problem and offer advice on dealing with it.

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## Planting in Summer

Summer is not always the ideal time for planting but if it must be done take time to prepare the hole and the plant really well. Before starting, soak some water storage crystals in a seaweed solution and then when absorbed, mix these through the soil along with lots of organic matter such as compost and well-rotted manure.

Make sure that the root ball of the plant to be transplanted is really wet even if this means soaking it in water for 20 minutes and, if a particularly tender plant, spray the leaves with a polymer leaf coating which will reduce moisture loss through transpiration.

Once the plant is in the ground, make sure that a 10cm layer of mulch is put over the soil but not up against the stem and apply a soil wetting agent. Water the plant very well and make sure the reticulation reaches it properly. Continue to hand water every day until it has settled in.



## Sowing and Planting Guide for Winter

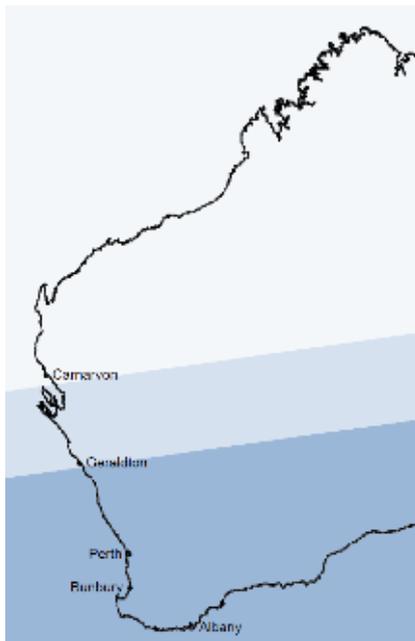
Western Australia is an enormous state with wide variations between the climatic zones. Use the table as a guide only and be sure to research your area well before purchasing seeds, seedlings or bulbs.

Plant labels and seed packets are always a good indication of what can be grown in your area in autumn but just to be sure, the team at your local Better Pets and Gardens store will be very happy to assist you in your selection.

Newly planted seeds and seedlings must not be allowed to dry out, even for a few hours.

Before planting seedlings, sit them in a shallow tray with a seaweed solution for a few hours as this will make the transplanting much more successful.

Sown seeds will also benefit from an application of seaweed solution and then again every week after.



- Tropical Zone
- Subtropical Zone
- Temperate Zone

### TROPICAL - (North of Carnarvon)

#### Vegetables:

Capsicums, chilli, cauliflowers, celery, cucumbers, eggplants, herbs, lettuces, melons, spring onions, radishes, rosella, silverbeet, squash, sweet corn, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, zucchini.

#### Flowers:

Ageratum, aster, balsam, celosia, cockscomb, coleus, cyclamen, impatiens, marigold, Mexican sunflower, salvia, sunflower, torenia, vinca, zinnia.

### SUBTROPICAL - (Between Geraldton and Carnarvon)

#### Vegetables:

Beans, broccoli, cabbages, capsicum, cauliflowers, celery, chilli, cucumbers, eggplants, herbs, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuces, melons, spring onions, potatoes, radishes, rhubarb, Silverbeet, squash, sweet corn, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, zucchinis.

#### Flowers:

Ageratum, aster, balsam, celosia, cockscomb, coleus, cyclamen, impatiens, marigold, Mexican sunflower, salvia, sunflower, torenia, vinca, zinnia.

### TEMPERATE (South of Geraldton)

#### Vegetables:

Beans, beetroot, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbages, capsicum, carrots, cauliflowers, celery, chilli, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, herbs, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuce, melons, spring onions, parsnips, radishes, rhubarb crowns, Silverbeet, sweet corn, tomatoes, zucchinis.

#### Flowers:

Ageratum, alyssum, boronia, calendula, cyclamen, forget-me-not, linaria, nasturtium, pansy, stock, verbena, vinca, viola, wallflower.