

Sustainable gardening

Planting trees

- as a guide, plant trees at least 2.5 metres away from your home
- check the location of above and below ground services and proximity to buildings before choosing tree species and locations
- energy efficient houses, which have been designed to achieve a high level of comfort using other means, may not benefit as much from the cooling effects of tree shade

Plant trees and shrubs on the eastern and western sides of your home

- these are the best locations for trees and shrubs to cool your home in summer
- for optimal cooling, plant the tallest trees in the north east and north west, tapering off to smaller trees in the south east and south west

Plant in the shade on the southern side of your home

- this side is ideal for plants that prefer shaded areas
- trees and large shrubs planted in the shade on the southern side won't affect internal home comfort

Planting trees and large shrubs on the northern side of your home

- this side generally receives lots of sun throughout the day, creating ideal conditions for sun-loving shrubs and groundcovers
- avoid planting trees on the northern side of your home as this will block winter sun and solar energy devices

Choose native plants

- a variety of native Brisbane plants are suitable for home gardens
- native plants, especially those that are adapted to your area and conditions, are more likely to grow successfully
- native animals are more likely to find food and shelter in native gardens
- native plants generally require less water and are easier to maintain
- local native plants are unlikely to escape into other areas and become bushland weeds

Looking after your garden

Mowing tips

- cut only the top third of your grass and keep mower blades sharp to reduce your lawn's watering needs
- service your mower regularly and mow at reasonable hours to reduce air and noise pollution
- compost your grass clippings

Mulch

Spread leaves and bark on top of your soil as garden mulch. This can:

- improve soil structure
- suppress weeds and prevent soil erosion
- act as a slow-release fertiliser for your plants
- provide an environment for plant-friendly insects
- keep moisture in the soil longer by reducing evaporation by up to 70%

Compost

Turn your organic waste into compost. Added to your garden soil, compost can:

- improve soil structure
- encourage good root growth
- boost the soil's water holding capacity
- provide food for your plants

Be waterwise

- group plants by their water needs so they only get the water they need
- mulch your garden to reduce water evaporation from the soil by up to 70%
- choose native plants for your garden as they usually need less water
- install a rainwater tank for garden use – this can reduce your dependence on the city’s water supply system by up to 50% and reduce your water bill

Store rainwater

Rainwater tanks store water for flushing toilets and watering the garden. This can:

- save you money on your water bills
- reduce stormwater run-off from your property
- provide a source of ‘soft’ and chlorine free water – ‘soft’ water is perfect for the delicate plants in your garden
- reduce demand on the city’s water supply and distribution systems as well as energy needed to operate water supply systems

Water features in your garden

- water features can help cool your home
- deter mosquitoes from breeding in your pond by stocking your pond with mosquito-eating native fish
- don’t use environmental weeds as ornamental plants in and around your pond – they can escape from your garden and into our waterways and bushland reserves