savewater!® gardens
Drought tolerant plant lists for:

- Backyard Gardens
- Cottage Gardens
- Formal Gardens
- Mediterranean Gardens
- Subtropical Gardens
Why save water in the garden?

Making your garden more water efficient means your garden will need less water and maintenance, perform better in dry conditions and be less affected by water restrictions. You will also be assisting the environment by leaving more water for environmental flows in rivers and streams and in turn reducing the need for more dams in the future. You can also save money by reducing your water bills and using the local NSW Rebate Schemes.

How to use the savewater!® gardens

Plant lists have been developed for five styles of garden, Cottage, Formal, Mediterranean, Subtropical and Backyard. Creating a new garden or renovating an old garden should only be attempted after very dry conditions and high level water restrictions have ceased. Once established these plants are drought tolerant.

The gardens make it easier to select drought tolerant plants without changing your preferred style of garden. By selecting plants from the savewater gardens you are choosing plants with lower water needs than many of the ‘traditional’ plants used in these garden styles. Generally speaking these plants will not need to be watered once they are established, but like all garden plants they need maintenance to keep them looking good.

You can use the gardens to start a new garden or to revamp an existing one and you don’t have to use all the plants listed. A range of plants has been provided that will suit different local conditions. If you wish to know what these plants look like in more detail type the plant name into ‘Google Images’ (Tip: You will get better results if you use the botanical name)

We recommend that you take the garden plant list to your local nursery. If the nursery wants to suggest lots of plants that are not on the list, consider going elsewhere. You can also search the internet for Sustainable Gardening Australia certified nurseries.

The important information you need from the nursery is what plants on the list are more suited to your local conditions, particularly soil types and climatic tolerances. Other good sources of information on suitable low water use plants for your local area are sometimes available from your water authority and/or local Council.

If you are interested in drought tolerant gardens with entirely native and indigenous plants, have a look at the Sustainable Gardening Australia website under Information Pages – Design.
Some tips for designing gardens to use less water

There are a number of ways to keep water in your garden rather than have it flow away. Decks, gravel paths and gravel edges to paving can allow water to soak into the ground. You can construct drainage ditches and channels so they finish in garden beds. Paths and courtyards can be pitched to drain to garden beds. Remember to allow for intense rain events so that potential flooding can be diverted out of harm’s way. Some plants can invade drains, if you are planting near drains check with your nursery.

**Lawn areas**

Minimise lawn areas with paving, paths, decking and garden beds or select an attractive groundcover, particularly in the front garden where there is often little traffic. Sustainable Gardening Australia recommends Sir Walter Buffalo as a warm season grass that can take traffic where you really need a lawn.

**Minimise evaporation**

Windbreaks and shade, from trees, fences, garden walls and shade cloth reduce temperatures and dry winds, and therefore evaporation. Modern garden styles like the Mediterranean Garden and the Subtropical Garden lend themselves to courtyards and enclosed or partially enclosed gardens. Try and minimise the number of pot plants, they dry out quickly and use more water than the same plant in the ground.

**Garden zoning**

Not all of your plants might be low water use, for example you might have a vegetable garden or an orchard, however if you group similar plants according to their water needs you will reduce your overall watering need and you can efficiently water those areas. There are any number of water tanks available and a growing number of greywater solutions which can be connected to drip irrigation systems making your garden independent of water restrictions and the need to use valuable drinking water.

**Soils and mulch**

All soils can be improved with the addition of compost; good compost including animal manures can improve water retention and drainage at the same time. Mulch is magic for water saving. It reduces moisture loss but also suppresses weeds, maintains soil temperatures and generally improves the soil. The best mulch is compost, make your own or get it from a nursery, but it does have to be replaced at least annually.


- Sustaining Gardens in Dry Times
- Sustainable Gardening Australia Certified Nurseries
- Water saving rebates available in NSW.
The Backyard Garden is a garden for private use and outdoor living. Spaces are needed for entertaining, storage and a range of family activities. The modern backyard often includes paving, a pergola, a water feature, table and chairs and plantings that are both functional and attractive. Plants in the Backyard Garden help to define spaces and provide shade, screening and privacy. Choosing plants for the backyard should be based around plants that are attractive, durable and have multiple features. These plants were selected to be suitable for gardens in eastern and southern Australia.

A savewater® Backyard Garden is designed to reduce water by using plants that have low water needs. This means selecting plants from low rainfall climates or those with special water conservation features. Some of the major plant groups used in a Backyard Garden include small trees, screening shrubs, small shrubs, ornamental grasses and lawn grasses. The image above has been computer generated to simulate the Backyard Garden style.

This plant list and text was prepared by Burnley Campus, School of Resource Management, University of Melbourne.

**Small Trees**

Small trees are essential elements in a Backyard Garden. They can provide shade and shelter, be used for climbing, have attractive form, flowers and leaves and produce edible fruit. Small trees grow anywhere form 5 to 10 metres in height and have single or multiple trunks. Because trees are large and long-lasting their selection needs careful consideration.

**Crepe Myrtle** *Lagerstroemia indica*

A deciduous tree growing to 8 m in height with attractive peeling bark and colourful autumn foliage. White, pink, or crimson flowers form over late summer. There are a number of varieties of this outstanding small tree. Pruning through biennial pollarding can assist in managing height and flowers.

**Medlar** *Mespilus germanica*

A small deciduous tree to 6 m with good autumn foliage, spring flowers and a useful rounded shape. The small edible fruits must be 'bletted'* before they can be eaten. Several different fruiting cultivars are available. (* Allowed to over-ripen, becoming soft to the touch).

**Quince** *Cydonia oblonga*

One of the toughest and most delightful small trees is the Quince. This small tree can grow to 5 m and has beautiful white-pink flowers in spring. The edible fruits form over summer and can be harvested in Autumn. Some light pruning and removal of basal suckers is needed.
Swamp Mallet *Eucalyptus spathulata subsp. spathulata*

Originating from the south-west of Western Australia, this small, evergreen tree tolerates the toughest and most difficult garden sites. Fast growing, it has a useful rounded shape and attractive flaky-orange bark. It is also a great tree for children, for climbing and the interesting buds, flowers and fruits.

Willow Bottlebrush *Callistemon salignus*

Larger than most Callistemon, this small tree to 7 m in height produces small creamy-yellow bottlebrush flowers in late winter, followed by bright pink new growth in spring. It tolerates waterlogged and compacted soils and produces an excellent weeping form when mature. Responds readily to pruning as needed.

Screening Shrubs

Screening shrubs grow from 3 to 4 metres in height, are evergreen and have good density of stems and leaves. They respond well to pruning, which means they can be grown as a hedge or left in a more naturalistic, open form. Plant spacings can be from 75 cm to 1.5 m, depending on how quickly you need a screen to grow.

Feijoa or Pineapple Guava *Acca sellowiana*

Growing to 4 m and spreading to 3 m, this native of South America produces a rounded, evergreen shrub. Once established it is a useful drought-tolerant shrub and produces green, oblong, edible fruits. A number of different fruiting varieties are available.

Escallonia *Escallonia rubra*

A dense, flowering shrub growing to 3 m in height. It produces dark pink to red flowers over summer and makes an excellent hedge and screening plant, particularly in coastal areas. Light pruning after flowering will maintain its form and flowers.

Common Myrtle *Myrtus communis*

A shrub of Mediterranean origin, this grows to 4 m and has fragrant small, white flowers and dark, shiny green leaves. Small black berries are produced over autumn. Can be a very useful hedging plant, but needs regular pruning.

Hillock Bush *Melaleuca hypericifolia*

This shrub from New South Wales grows to 4 m and produces red bottlebrush flowers from late spring to summer. Best used for lower shrub screening, it is also highly attractive to native birds when in flower.
Small Shrubs

In many gardens it is often the smaller plants at or below eye-level that attract the most attention, such as this group - shrubs growing from 0.5 to 2 metres in height. Plants can provide attraction from features such as form and flowering, but small shrubs also can also be used to provide low screening, to focus direction or frame part of a larger planting.

**Gold Dust Wattle** *Acacia acinacea*
A native of south-eastern Australia this tough and durable shrub can grow up to 2 m in height. It produces masses of globular, yellow flowers during winter-spring. Light pruning can further promote a dense, suckering habit if desired.

**Sage-leaf Rock Rose** *Cistus salviifolius*
A small shrub growing to 1 m high by 1 m spread it has small, grey-green leaves and produces masses of white-pink flowers during spring. Tolerating a range of soil conditions, this is best sited where there is good drainage and full sun.

**Native Fuchsia** *Correa reflexa*
One of the most useful genera of Australian shrubs is the genus Correa. This species is quite variable, with different forms growing anywhere from 0.5 to 1.5 m in height. Small green - red tubular flowers are produced over winter and spring.

Ornamental Grasses And Relatives

Ornamental grasses and relatives produce clumps of foliage that are excellent plants for the Backyard Garden. They provide accent and contrast through their form, texture through their foliage and many have the added bonus of attractive flowers. Used as specimen plants, or in mixed plantings with shrubs and other plants, they can also be mass planted for effect.

**Feather Reed Grass** *Calamagrostis X acutiflora*
An upright, clumping sterile hybrid from Germany, this can grow up to 2 m in height when in flower over summer. Produces a dramatic upright form and can also be used for screening when mass planted. Needs pruning back to the base in winter, it performs best in good quality soils and some summer rainfall.

**Spiny-headed Mat Rush** *Lomandra longifolia*
A tough and durable species, widely used in urban landscape plantings, it produces a soft, rhizome at its base and an upright clump of green foliage. Once established it will tolerate a range of conditions, including dry shade and waterlogged soils.
**Turf Lily** *Lirope muscari*

The Turf Lily grows into an upright clump of dark, green leaves and purple spikes of flowers that form over summer. It is best grown in shade and is moderately drought tolerant once established. Can be used to great effect as garden edging or as a highlight in shade.

**New Zealand Flax** *Phormium tenax*

New Zealand Flax is a clumping perennial with large, linear, sword-like leaves growing from 2 to 4 m in height. Many of the newer hybrid varieties are much smaller in height and there is a wide range of leaf colour forms available. Moderately drought tolerant once established.

**Lawn Grasses**

In a savewater® Backyard Garden lawns should be small in size and established during the season when natural rainfall is most readily available. Virtually all lawn grass species need some supplementary water to survive drought, although some can rejuvenate quickly after these conditions. This is an important consideration in choosing a lawn grass, along with toughness, wear-capacity and suitability for the site conditions.

**Common Couch** *Cynodon dactylon*

Couch is one of the easiest turf species to grow but like many spreading grasses it can be very invasive. Best in sunny locations, it produces vigorous runners over warmer months and has good tolerance to drought once established. In cooler climates Couch will often die back over winter but recover once the warmer weather begins.

**Buffalo Grass** *Stenophyllum secundatum*

Buffalo Grass is a warm season turf grass that produces vigorous, fleshy runners and dense, coarse foliage. It is best used in warm, sunny locations with good drainage and has reasonable tolerance to drought once established.

**Weeping Grass** *Microlaena stipoides*

Many Australian native grasses are being tried as lawns and Weeping Grass is one of the best. Good preparation and establishment are needed to successfully grow this tufting, fine bladed grass as it grows into a soft, compact lawn. Weed control is important and the grass is best cut to a taller height than exotic lawn grasses (25 to 30 mm). It tolerates a range of conditions, even deep shade.
COTTAGE GARDEN

The Cottage Garden is a garden of flowers and colour from herbaceous plants, climbing plants and shrubs. The garden design often includes a central pathway, and simple layers of plants extending outwards and upwards to fill any available space. Choosing plants for the Cottage Garden is often based around flowering properties, including colour, duration and seasonality, although plant form and texture are also worth considering. Shrubs and climbing plants are essential as they provide a permanent structure in the garden and can extend flowering and interest over the year. Part of the challenge is to develop a garden that produces lots of flowers, but doesn’t require huge amounts of maintenance to thrive. These plants were selected to be suitable for gardens in eastern and southern Australia.

A savewater® Cottage Garden is designed to reduce water by using plants that have low water needs. This means selecting plants from low rainfall climates or those with special water conservation features. Some of the major plant groups used in a Cottage Garden include edging or border plants, perennials, climbing plants and evergreen shrubs. The image above has been computer generated to simulate the Cottage Garden style.

This plant list and text was prepared by Burnley Campus, School of Resource Management, University of Melbourne.

Climbing Plants

Climbing plants in the Cottage Garden can be grown on a frame or trellis to provide vertical colour or used as a backdrop on a wall or structure. Vigorous climbers will need solid support structures and good maintenance for effective management.

**Banksia Rose** *Rosa banksiae*

Not a true climber, but a scrambling shrub growing to 5 or 6 m in height, The Banksia Rose can be an excellent plant for the Cottage Garden with masses of flowers produced over spring. Reasonably drought tolerant once established there are white and double yellow flower varieties are available. This generally needs pruning only every few years after flowering or when its vigour needs controlling.

**Carolina Jasmine** *Gelsemium sempervirens*

An evergreen climber from southern USA that grows up to 4 or 5 m in height. It has glossy, green leaves and masses of yellow trumpet-like flowers in spring. Easily managed due to its soft habit and form, it will grow successfully on a light trellis or frame.
**Chinese Wisteria** *Wisteria sinensis*

A vigorous, deciduous climber with compound leaves and pendulous, lilac flowers in spring. Drought tolerant once established, the Chinese Wisteria can be slow growing at first, but vigorous in maturity. It needs a strong structure or frame for support and looks best when pruned during the winter.

**Native Sarsparilla** *Hardenbergia violacea*

An evergreen climber found across Australia with clusters of purple or white flowers over spring. Tends to grow best where there is plenty of light. A number of different varieties are available.

**Evergreen Shrubs**

Flowering evergreen shrubs provide structure and colour in the Cottage Garden. Being a more permanent feature of the garden, their choice needs more careful consideration, especially in smaller areas. Plants should be spaced at 3 to 4 m to enable flowering perennials to fill in the voids.

**Blue Hibiscus** *Alyogyne huegeli*

A relative of the Common Hibiscus this is plant originates from South and Western Australia. It forms an upright shrub to 2 m in height and has masses of mauve-coloured flowers in spring. Pruning after flowering improves the plant habit and encourage repeat flowers during summer, although the small, hairy capsules are also interesting.

**Wart-leaf Ceanothus** *Ceanothus papillosus var roweanus*

This plant forms a dense evergreen shrub up to 2 or 3 m in height. It originates from California and like all members of the genus it produces magnificent blue flowers during spring. Tends to be slow growing and can be very drought tolerant once established. It will not recover from hard pruning into older wood.

**Geraldton Waxflower** *Chamelaucium uncinatum*

A shrub from Western Australian, Geraldton Wax has open habit and grows up to 3 m and spreads to 4 m. It has masses of white-pink-red flowers over winter spring and is best grown in open, sandy soils. Many different varieties are available.
Evergreen Shrubs (continued)

**Balearic Island Sage** *Phlomis italica*
A pink flowering sub-shrub that grows to 1 m in height and produces pink-lilac flowers during spring. Like its close relative the Jerusalem Sage (*Phlomis fruticosa*) this is easily cultivated in the Cottage Garden. A hard prune every few years will improve plant habit and form.

**Edging or Border Plants**
These are the plants that thrive by the edges of the path or bed. They are generally low-growing, groundhugging and provide colour over a long period. Most need full sun to grow successfully. Plant spacings can be quite high (around 15 cm) to develop a rapid cover and retain the edges and boundaries.

**Cut-leaf Daisy** *Brachyscome multifida*
A flowering perennial from eastern Australia growing up to 50 cm in height. With colourful pink and mauve daisy flowers for much of the year, it is improved by occasional pruning to maintain density and flowers. There are a number of varieties of this plant available.

**Common Everlasting** *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*
A plant originating from grass and woodland communities across Australia, the Common Everlasting is a low, spreading perennial, growing up to 50 cm in height. From spring to autumn it produces masses of small, yellow button heads of flowers. Regular pruning encourages a better form and flowering.

**Catmint** *Nepeta X faassenii*
A low-growing, spreading or upright perennial with lilac-mauve flowers over spring and summer. It has a reliable flowering habit and pungent-smelling foliage. Many different varieties are available. Hard pruning after flowering in spring will produce another mass of flowers in 8 to 10 weeks time.

**Lambs Ear** *Stachys byzantina*
A tough and durable perennial with soft, silver, felt-like foliage. Growing to 50 cm in height when flowering in spring, its felt-like leaves rarely grow to more than 20 cm. Its vigorous growth can be easily managed by pruning and/or dividing the plants over winter.
Perennials

Flowering perennials are the mainstay of the Cottage Garden. They form the bulk of the flowering display over spring-summer-autumn and with careful choice the flowering season can be extended all year round. Try to use a selection of plants that have similar needs in different spaces in the garden. Most can be planted at spacings of between 30 to 50 cm, depending on soil and climatic conditions.

**Flannel Flower** *Actinotus helianthi*
A relative of Parsley, this flowering perennial comes from NSW and southern Queensland. It forms an upright, feathery plant to 80 cm in height and has white, woolly, daisy-like flowers over spring and summer. Best treated as a short-lived perennial and planted in a sunny, well-drained location.

**Leek** *Allium ampeloprasum*
One of the easiest flowers to grow is the Leek. Normally grown as a vegetable for its swollen stem bases, it can also be grown for its beautiful round heads of mauve flowers. These form over late spring and early summer from clumps of blue-grey ‘onionlike’ leaves.

**Sea Lavender** *Limonium perezii*
A tough perennial from the Canary Islands, the Sea Lavender has large, basal leaves and mauve and white flowers borne on wiry stems. It grows up to 80 cm in height and is useful for its long lasting flowers. Tolerant of only the mildest frosts it is excellent for coastal gardens and is best in dry, well-drained locations.

**Russian Sage** *Perovskia atriplicifolia*
A sub-shrub from central Asia with aromatic, grey-green leaves and spires of woolly, mauve flowers in summer. It can grow to a metre or so in height and is best managed by pruning back to the base after flowering.
Silver Spur Flower *Plectranthus argenteus*

A sub-shrub from New South Wales and Queensland, this plant grows to 1 m in height. It has silver foliage and upright light mauve-blue flowers over summer. Whilst very tolerant of dry conditions it is sensitive to frost but recovers readily during spring.

Germander Sage *Salvia chamaedryoides*

Many of the gardens Salvias are excellent low water use plants, especially those from drier climates. Germander Sage is native to Mexico and produces sky blue flowers from spring to autumn. It grows up to 60 cm in height and has a spreading habit once established. It will flower 2 or 3 times from spring to late autumn if pruned back.
FORMAL GARDEN

The Formal Garden is a garden of well-defined lines and strong structure. The garden is often designed with a geometric layout with further division based around separate rooms. Symmetrical plantings and the use of clipped and stylized plant forms, such as hedges and topiary, help to define and link elements within the Formal Garden. Ornamentation such as statues, sculpture and water features provide focal points within the garden. Simple colour themes dominate planting design in a Formal Garden, with seasonal highlights often provided by annuals and perennials. Durable surfaces such as paving and gravel provide for a range of uses and can also reduce water use. These plants were selected to be suitable for gardens in eastern and southern Australia.

A savewater® Formal Garden is designed to reduce water by using plants that have low water needs. This means selecting plants from low rainfall climates or those with special water conservation features. Some of the major plant groups used in a Formal Garden includes columnar evergreen trees, low hedges, topiary plants and annuals and perennials. The image above has been computer generated to simulate the Formal Garden style.

This plant list and text was prepared by Burnley Campus, School of Resource Management, University of Melbourne.

Columnar Evergreen Trees

Columnar evergreen trees are distinctive elements in a Formal Garden. They have a definitive shape that provides accent or contrast, or when close planted can be used to form a tall hedge or screen.

Richmond Cypress Pine *Callitris columellaris*

A tree from coastal northern New South Wales and southern Queensland, this erect tree can grow up from 12 m to 16 m in height. It has dark green foliage and tiny round cones. It is slow growing this tree and best used in a sunny, well-drained garden location.

Pencil Cypress *Cupressus sempervirens, Stricta Group*

The dark green, upright spires of the Pencil Cypress are a common sight in Formal Gardens across the Mediterranean. Growing up to 20m in height, it thrives in hot and dry garden locations.
Topiary

Topiary, a form of managing plant forms into clipped shapes, is often a focus in the Formal Garden. Techniques can include ‘standard’ forms, pruned to 1 or 2 m in height, or rounded plant forms clipped into particular shapes and forms. These provide a dramatic contrast in texture and form to other plantings in the garden.

**Bay Tree *Laurus nobilis***

Clipping a Bay Tree into a shape, avoids its natural habit, which is an evergreen tree growing up to 10 m in height. Whilst initially slow growing, the bay Tree is an excellent choice for topiary as it is long-lived and any clipped leaves can be used in the kitchen.

**Rosemary *Rosmarinus officinalis***

A common hedging plant, Rosemary is also useful as a plant for clipping into shapes and forms. With many different varieties, the best choices for topiary are small-leaved upright forms of Rosemary. It can also be grown over a frame to develop a particular desired shape or form.

Low Hedges

Low hedges help to define space and provide direction in a Formal Garden. Growing up to 1 metre in height, factors influencing plant choice include growth rates and vigour, foliage colour and maintenance requirements (especially the frequency of clipping).

**Common or English Box *Buxus sempervirens***

The Common Box is one of the most useful low hedges for the low water use landscape. Slow growing, with deep dark green leaves it clips well and generally needs around 2 cuts per year to manage its form. Many different varieties are available.

**Correa pulchella***

A small, Australian shrub growing to 50 cm in height. This produces small, delicate tubular red-orange flowers during late winter-spring. Useful as a low flowering hedge it needs careful establishment, then around 3 to 4 cuts per year.

**Butchers Broom *Ruscus aculeatus***

Butchers Broom is a tough, suckering shrub growing up to 1 m in height, originating from southern Europe. It is excellent as a ‘barrier’ hedge in dry shade due to its spiny green leaves and woody stems. Whilst not requiring clipping to maintain its form it does require pruning of suckers to stop invasion of nearby planted areas.
**Lavender Cotton** *Santolina chamaecyparissus*
A small, grey-leaved shrub from Mediterranean regions, Lavender Cotton grows up to 50 cm in height. It has tightly clustered foliage and form and produces yellow heads of flowers over spring-summer. It generally needs around 4 cuts per year to manage its form.

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**Annuals And Perennials**

Much of the colour in a Formal Garden is provided through the use of flowering herbaceous plants, planted as infill inside hedges or parterres or used in containers. These can be semi-permanent by using perennials or as seasonal highlights through using annuals.

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**Golden Everlasting** *Xerochrysum bracteata*
An annual, sometimes perennial plant growing up to 1 m in height, the Golden Everlasting is found across much of Australia. It produces yellow, papery heads of flowers up to 3 cm across during summer. There are many different varieties available.

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**Common Sage** *Salvia officinalis*
Common Sage is an upright, shrubby perennial growing from 0.5 to 1 m in height. Originating from North Africa and the Mediterranean it has grey-green leaves (useful in the kitchen) and clusters of pink-white flowers during spring. A number of different leaf and flower colour varieties are available.

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**Rosemary** *Rosmarinus officinalis*
A common hedging plant, Rosemary is also useful as a plant for clipping into shapes and forms. With many different varieties, the best choices for topiary are small-leaved upright forms of Rosemary. It can also be grown over a frame to develop a particular desired shape or form.
The Mediterranean Garden is a garden that provides respite and retreat, a garden full of colour, function and interest. An essential component is a courtyard or patio, often shaded by small evergreen trees or a pergola with climbing plants. Evergreen shrubs generally provide the backbone and structure to the garden and can be complimented with containers of herbs and flowers. Hedges and clipped plant forms, such as topiary adds interest to a Mediterranean Garden when summer seems a long way off! Scented plants (both foliage and flowers) and ‘spiky-leaved plants’ also are used for interest and focus. These plants were selected to be suitable for gardens in eastern and southern Australia.

A savewater® Mediterranean Garden is designed to reduce water by using plants that have low water needs. This means selecting plants from low rainfall climates or those with special water conservation features. Some of the major plant groups used in a Mediterranean Garden includes small trees, evergreen shrubs, deciduous climbers and kitchen garden plants. The image above has been computer generated to simulate the Mediterranean Garden style.

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**Small Evergreen Trees**

Small evergreen trees can provide shade, shelter, fragrance and food in a Mediterranean Garden. Most grow between 5 and 10 metres in height and are best selected for the conditions of the site and specific multi-use properties and functions.

**Grecian Strawberry Tree** *Arbutus andrachnoides*

A small tree that grows up to 7 m in height, it has a multitrunked habit and flaking, reddish-brown bark. It can be a slow growing tree and it produces clusters of white flowers in spring, followed by clusters of small red fruits in autumn.

**Coastal Banksia** *Banksia integrifolia subsp. integrifolia*

A small, flowering tree growing up to 10 m from south-eastern Australia, it is particularly useful for coastal and dry climate gardens. It forms creamy-yellow bottlebrush flowers up to 12 cm in length. Tolerating a range of sites and conditions, this is a tough and attractive small tree.
**Fig Ficus carica**

The deciduous Fig tree grows up to 5 m in height and is quite drought tolerant once established. The edible fruits form over many months and are easily cultivated. Many different varieties are available.

**Pomegranate Punica granatum**

One of the earliest used Mediterranean plants, the deciduous Pomegranate is an excellent small tree for the garden. It has attractive orange-yellow flowers in summer, yellow autumn foliage in autumn, bronze new growth in spring and pulpy red and orange fruits.

**Olive Olea europaea subsp. europaea**

No Mediterranean Garden would be complete without an Olive tree. Slow, but long-lasting, Olives form a small open, multitrunked tree. Needing good drainage and full sun there are many different varieties available. Seedless varieties, such as ‘Swan Hill’ or ‘Tolleys upright’ should be used in areas where Olives are an environmental weed.

### Shrubs

Evergreen shrubs are essential element of this garden. They can be left to grow naturally or clipped in hedges and shapes. Many of the grey or silver foliage shrubs can also be clipped into low hedges and their colour providing a useful foil for even the slightest flowers in bloom.

**Silver Wormwood Artemisia arborescens**

An upright, silver-foliage shrub growing to 1 m tall, the Silver Wormwood is a tough and easy to cultivate shrub. It can be managed through biennial or occasional pruning to mange its habit.

**Coastal Correa Correa alba**

The Coastal Correa originates from south-eastern Australia and grows into a rounded shrub up to 1.5 m tall and 1 m in spread. It has small, white starry flowers and is easily managed as a clipped shrub or hedge.
Shrubs (continued)

Curry Plant *Helichrysum italicum*

The Curry Plant is named for its pungent-smelling foliage, particularly during a hot day in summer. It forms a small shrub, 50 cm in height, with silver narrow leaves. Useful as a low clipped hedge it can also be left to grow in a natural rounded form.

Common Lavender *Lavandula angustifolia subsp. angustifolia*

A variable shrub growing up to 1.5 m in height, Lavender is a widely cultivated flowering plant. Its attractive and fragrant spikes of blue flowers in spring-summer make it one of the most widely-cultivated ornamental plants. Easy to grow, the main task is to prune during or after flowering.

Kitchen Garden Plants

These are suitable for containers and in the garden. Most are low water use plants originating from Mediterranean regions and not surprisingly have found their way into gardens and homes as well.

Lemon *Citrus limon*

An essential Mediterranean Garden plant is the Lemon. Most varieties grow between 2 and 3 m in height. Sensitive to frost and poor drainage, once established the Lemon produces good fruit in a range of conditions. It is best planted in a container in very dry areas to provide supplementary water over summer.

Globe Artichoke *Cynara scolymus*

With its large, silver leaves and wonderful statuesque form, the Globe Artichoke deserves a place for these features alone. A perennial with a number of different varieties, the green-purple edible flower buds can be harvested over late spring and summer.

Pine Geranium *Pelargonium denticulatum*

This is a sprawling sub-shrub that grows up to 50 cm in height. It has strongly-scented ‘fern-like’ leaves and mauve flowers that form over spring and summer. A useful low-growing plant for its texture, form and flowers.

Common Thyme *Thymus vulgaris*

The Common Thyme forms a sprawling, woody sub-shrub of wiry stems, rarely growing more than 20 cm in height. Best grown in a full sun location there are many different forms of this excellent kitchen herb.
Deciduous Climbers

For the pergola or the trellis, no Mediterranean Garden would be complete without a deciduous climber that holds its leaves over summer and sheds them in autumn. Apart from summer shade, these climbers can also provide flowers and fruit. A good solid support structure is needed and most plants can be readily managed by some vigorous hard pruning over winter.

**Campsis Campsis grandiflora**

A deciduous woody climber from south-eastern China, this plant is tolerant of low water conditions once established. It produces masses of orange-red trumpets of flowers over summer and is tolerant of a range of soil and climatic conditions. It needs a strong pergola to support its vigour and growth.

**Grape Vitis vinifera**

The humble grape is one of the toughest and most drought tolerant climbers. Many varieties exist including table grape, wine grape and colourful autumn foliage forms. Specialised pruning is generally required for fruiting varieties.
**SUBTROPICAL GARDEN**

The Subtropical Garden is a garden with luxuriant, leafy forms, hot colours and bold textures. A key feature is a number of enclosed and protected zones within the garden, dominated by layers of plantings. This can be assisted by the presence of existing walls or structures, clad in climbers; but it is best achieved by using small trees to provide a canopy of shade. Beneath this canopy plants used include those with dark green leaves, colourful foliage and bright flowers or fruits. A water feature is a common element of the subtropical garden and further helps to increase humidity. Shade-tolerant perennials dominate the ground layer, complete with rich, organic mulches. These plants were selected to be suitable for gardens in eastern and southern Australia.

A savewater® Subtropical Garden is designed to reduce water by using plants that have low water needs. This means selecting plants from low rainfall climates or those with special water conservation features. Water features in this type of garden can be reinvented by using alternatives such as a dry creek bed, mosaic-mirror or rumbled blue glass ‘pond’. Some of the major plant groups used in a subtropical garden includes evergreen trees, tall foliage plants, flowering shrubs, evergreen climbers and ground covers. The image above has been computer generated to simulate the Subtropical Garden style.

This plant list and text was prepared by Burnley Campus, School of Resource Management, University of Melbourne.

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**Evergreen Trees**

Evergreen trees growing up to 15 m in height provide structure, shade, protection and interest in a subtropical garden. They need to tolerate high light levels, have large foliage and either attractive flowers or fruit.

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**Blueberry Ash** *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*

The Blueberry Ash is a small tree or large shrub that occurs naturally in eastern Australian forests and adjacent communities. When mature it has a rounded shape with dark green, glossy leaves. Fragrant white pendulous flowers are produced during spring and early summer. Suitable for a range of sites, except those with severe frosts, it responds well to pruning and can also provide a useful hedge or screen.

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**Avocado** *Persea americana*

Avocados can grow up to 12 m in height, but are generally managed through pruning to around 4 or 5 m. Best in warmer climates with some summer rainfall, trees are frost-tender until established and need good drainage to thrive. A number of varieties are available and at least two different trees are needed to ensure fruit is produced.
Wigandia *Wigandia caracasana*
Growing up to 5 m in height, Wigandia is often a large shrub rather than a small tree. It produces large coarse leathery leaves and terminal heads of mauve-blue flowers during spring and summer. Pruning of unwanted basal suckers is the main maintenance task.

Native Frangipani *Hymenosporum flavum*
The Native Frangipani originates from New South Wales and Queensland rainforests. It can grow up to 15 m in height and has a distinctive upright, pyramidal shape when young. During spring it produces very fragrant tubular yellow flowers. Slow to establish, this tree is best in warmer climates with some summer rainfall.

Tall Foliage Plants
Bold foliage perennials and palms that grow from 3 to 6 metres in height form much of the character in Subtropical Gardens. Like evergreen trees, they need to tolerate full-sun conditions but also be able to grow in some shade if provided.

European Fan Palm *Chamaerops humilis*
Originating from the Mediterranean region, this can grow into a palm with a single, trunk up to 6 m tall. More often, especially in drier locations, it produces a multi-stemmed habit up to 3 m with its distinctive ‘fan-like’ leaves the main feature. Very tolerant of dry conditions once established.

Gymea Lily *Doryanthes excelsa*
Native to the northern New South Wales, this clumping perennial with flax-like leaves grows to 2 m in height. When flowering in spring, a stalk rises from the centre of the plant carrying clusters of red flowers and is up to 5 m tall. Tolerates a range of soil and light conditions.

Abyssinian Banana *Ensete ventricosum*
This broad foliaged perennial grows up to 6 m tall. From the distinctive long leaves rise a dropping cluster of inedible banana-like fruits. Best in warmer climates with some summer rainfall.

Chinese Fan Palm *Livistonia chinensis*
Another Fan Palm, this species originates from southern China. It grows up to 5 m tall and has distinctive floppy ends to the segments of each leaf. Initially slow growing it will develop a stout trunk with age. Best in warmer climates with some summer rainfall.
Tall Foliage Plants (continued)

**White Bird Of Paradise Strelitzia nicolae**
Not unlike a Banana, this large perennial can grow to 6 m in height. Initially slow-growing, it eventually produces a slight ‘trunk’, clasped with the bases of the long, sword-like foliage. It is suitable for cooler climates and is reasonably drought tolerant once established.

**Flowering Shrubs**
Flowering shrubs can provide colour, form and texture in the Subtropical Garden. Plants in this group need to either tolerate the deep shade provided by upper canopy or used on the margins where light levels are higher.

**Pink Hibiscus Hibiscus splendens**
A native shrub from coastal regions of New South Wales and Queensland, this shrub grows around 3 to 4 m in height. It has lobed leaves and produces large pink flowers, 150mm across, in summer. Slightly frost tender until established, it is best used in only partially shaded areas and can be managed by pruning after flowering.

**Japanese Aralia Fatsia japonica**
The Japanese Aralia forms a branching shrub up to 3 m in height. It has distinctive large, glossy, palm-like leaves and is suitable for very shaded locations. The deeper the shade the deeper green the leaves become. It produces branching heads of white flowers in autumn.

**Evergreen Climbers**
Evergreen climbers provide an additional vertical element in the Subtropical Garden. They can also increase leaf coverage and provide additional interest through form, flowers and fruit. It is best to choose species tolerant of shade and where growth can be managed according to the garden space.

**Kangaroo Vine Cissus antarctica**
The Kangaroo Vine originates from eastern Australia rainforests and climbs by means of clinging tendrils. The bright green leaves can form a dense screen and are followed by bright copper-coloured new growth in spring. It can be very vigorous, but is easily maintained by pruning.

**Star Jasmine Trachelospermum jasminoides**
A popular climber and ground cover this evergreen plant from East Asia has glossy green leaves and very fragrant white flowers that form during summer. Best used in a part-shaded location, once established it is moderately drought tolerant.
Ground Covers

Ground cover perennial plants provide the floor for the Subtropical Garden. Growing up to 100 cm in height, they need to have interesting foliage and/or flowers and tolerate deep and often dry shade. All will need some supplementary water during establishment.

**Billbergia nutans**

One of the Bromeliads, this plant produces a clump of narrow, deep green leaves up to 50 cm long. The spikes of blue-green flowers are held on pink stems, providing dramatic colour contrasts. Useful for very dry and shaded locations, it will take some time to produce a dense ground cover.

**Mondo Grass Ophiopogon japonicus**

Mondo Grass forms tufts of narrow, grass-like leaves that are 10 to 20 cm in height. Slow initially, once established it can spread rapidly though vigorous stolons below the ground. Forms a very dense ground cover from deep shade to partially sunny locations.

**Paroo Lily Dianella caerulea**

A tufting and spreading perennial with dark green, strap-like leaves, the Paroo Lily is found across a range of habitats in eastern Australia. Because of this natural variation there are many different forms available for sale, growing from 40 cm to 100 cm in height. Used for ground cover in shade and full sun locations, its features include attractive blue, star-like flowers and mauve, glossy berries.