

Guide to

*Coffs Harbour
Garden Club Inc
Spring Garden
Competition*

WATERWISE GARDEN
JUDGING CRITERIA

WaterWise Garden categories are proudly sponsored every year by Coffs Harbour City Council

Website:

www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/water

Phone: (02) 6648 4000



Aspect	Points	Why?
Overall Garden Design – 15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the area of lawn (meeting functional and aesthetic requirements) • Maximise non-planting treatments eg paving, decking, etc, (without creating “hot” spots of large, unshaded paved areas) • Select low water use plants suitable for the environmental conditions • Dense, consolidated, well mulched planted areas • Efficient and flexible watering system • Use of windbreaks, pergolas, vines, shade cloth etc, to shelter house, outdoor living and plants • Site sensitive eg, use of contours/drainage areas • Balanced/Aesthetically pleasing design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Most summer water is used on lawns ➤ Sparse, scattered plants are more difficult to water efficiently than those in defined areas ➤ Clever use of sheltering such as pergolas, vines, etc, can protect your plants and you from the stress of our Australian climate ➤ WaterWise Gardens can include thirsty plants, but these need to be located in appropriate sections of the garden, eg, a heavily shaded natural low point in your garden where water collects after rain ➤ Above all, a good WaterWise Garden has a quality design that balances the lawn area, shrub and flower plantings and the hard surface areas
Soil Improvement – 15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal parts soil/organic matter - at least top 15-20cm soil • Use of soil wetting agents and water saving crystals (especially sandy soils and pot plants) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ High organic matter content improves the soils' capacity to retain moisture and nutrients and therefore requires less of these inputs to maintain a healthy garden. This saves you money, time and effort, but also promotes better growth with less plant stress between waterings. Most important at this depth where feeder roots are found
Lawns – 10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select most water efficient turf variety for the environmental conditions • Even application of water and sprinklers not throwing onto any hard surfaces • No visible thatch, fungal or moss problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Warm season grasses are recommended for our area as they are both water efficient and drought tolerant ➤ Thatch (a layer of brown material near soil surface), fungal or moss problems in lawns indicate uneven or excess water distribution or non-wettable soils needing repair
Plants – 15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select most water efficient plant varieties for the environmental conditions • Plant in Watering Zones • Even water application and sprinklers not throwing onto any hard surfaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A mix of plants with diverse water needs in one bed leads to water wastage. Grouping plants with similar water needs together (Watering Zones) allows them to be watered efficiently

Aspect	Points	Why?
Irrigation – 10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trigger nozzles on all hoses • Micro-sprinklers, drippers and sprinklers in appropriate areas • Rain sensors/Soil moisture sensors • Timers • Seasonal irrigation regime • Rainwater tanks/greywater systems or other sustainable alternate water sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A well designed and maintained irrigation system will ensure water is applied as efficiently as possible ➤ Rain Sensors, Soil Moisture Sensors and Timers on irrigation systems will ensure your garden is not over-watered ➤ Water needs in your garden change based on seasonal conditions, so you need to monitor and adjust the water applied on a regular basis
Mulch – 20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic mulches preferred • Minimum 20mm thick across entire planted area (minimum 75mm thick for woodchip and bark, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Spread over the entire planted area, mulch can reduce water loss through evaporation by as much as 70% ➤ Organic mulch also prevents excessive runoff, restricts weeds, keeps soil temperature cool and adds nutrients to soil as it rots – saves on weeding and fertilising time, effort and money
Biodiversity – 5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential habitat and food sources for native fauna • Avoid plants which are, or could be, environmental weeds in this area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Native birds and animals lose their homes and food sources when new homes and gardens are developed. These native birds and animals require denser, layered plantings and shelter, eg, nest boxes, whereas introduced species, such as Indian Myna birds thrive in open, sparsely planted gardens ➤ One of the most expensive management issues for our local reserves is garden escapees becoming problematic weeds
General Quality and Health – 10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No weeds • Neat and clean • Disease and pest free • Good horticultural practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A WaterWise Garden needs to be of the same quality and health as a “traditional” garden – a high quality and obviously healthy garden is a good sign that there is no under or over watering, but that water is being applied efficiently

Need more information on WaterWise Gardening?

Check out the practical examples in the WaterWise Garden in the Regional Botanic Gardens.

Why is there judging criteria?

The WaterWise Garden categories have been in the Spring Garden Competition since 2003 and judging the winners has always been based on a set criteria. As the world of gardening, particularly in relation to water efficiency, has evolved remarkably since 2003, so too have these judging criteria.

New products, technologies, plant availabilities, gardening and landscaping TV shows, government education and a multitude of other influences have combined to increase the general awareness of the community to the importance of using our water wisely, so our WaterWise Garden categories need a sophisticated judging tool to ensure a fair result for all the hard work of entrants.

How were the judging criteria written?

The new criteria are not drastically different to the old ones – they are still based on the information in the Coffs Harbour Water *WaterWise Garden Guide*, which is available online at www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/water. Also included are some judging points from other WaterWise Garden competitions from around Australia.

This means that gardens winning the WaterWise categories in our local competition will be in the same league as top gardens across the nation.

Why a Guide to the WaterWise Garden Judging Criteria?

This guide has been compiled to explain some of the points which the judges will be looking for in your WaterWise Garden.

What are the WaterWise Garden Judging Criteria?

The criteria are set out, with explanations, in the middle pages of this brochure.