

GARDENING WITH WATER RESTRICTIONS... THE NEW NORM?

I know I keep banging on about water restrictions and water wise gardening...but now with winter come and nearly gone and hardly any rain, well I think we need to rethink our gardens.



It does not have to be doom and gloom, we don't have to have braais with a dust bowl around us and a few aloes hanging around. Nor do we have to have a fully graveled or paved up garden. We have alternative options here in the Western Cape, for we as Capetonians the lack of water is now unfortunately going to be the new norm... for a while? who knows...

For the people who have boreholes/well points then gardening can just carry on, hopefully there will be no problems. Those without boreholes/well points are going to have to rethink their gardens... But do not panic, there are other parts of the world where they have had droughts for many a year and we can learn a lot from them. For instance, dry gardening is used in dry climates, we can use dry gardening for not just our gardens but also for edible gardens.

Dry gardens mean where one can have a garden where there is very scarce water, using drought tolerant plants. The plants do NOT have to be indigenous, there are lots of Mediterranean plants that we can use.

I have listed just some plants that are more tolerant of the dry conditions. You will notice that not all listed are indigenous, however they are easy to get hold of at your local nursery.

Lavender, Rosemary, Agapanthus, Buddleya, Cistus, silver bush, Geraniums, pelargoniums (scented), Artemesia, most grasses, Cannas, Pennisetums, Salvia leucantha, Verbena Ridgida, Nepeta... The list goes on and on....

So, you see, just by doing a little bit of research and changing our mindset we can have a garden, not quite an English country garden however a garden that will last, look stunning and more suitable for our climate.

Water wise gardening / Dry gardening is not just about choosing suitable plants, to have a garden using less water also requires the following:

1. When looking to buy plants try not to buy the lush healthy plants, rather select the smaller tough stockier plants. The reason being is that the smaller harsher looking plants are more climatized than the lush pretty ones which have mostly been kept in greenhouses then brought straight to the nursery without having climatized. When VILLAGE GARDENS plant gardens for clients, we always use the smaller plants purely for



this reason, as we know they will have time to climatise, their roots will work downwards towards the moisture in the soil and establish themselves quicker thus being a stronger healthier plant that will last in the client's garden. This is not always going to be visually pleasing for the client initially but as we explain come 6 months down the line the garden will be established and these plants will be stronger, look visually pleasing and it is money very well spent.

2. Planting time is best in Autumn when the soil is moist, the plants are then settled for when summer approaches. Group plant the plants that require the same amount of water together.
3. Drainage is important as water wise plants don't really mind sandy soils however they don't enjoy clay or poor drainage, as I tell my clients they don't like their little feet too wet (roots). So, make a saucer in the soil about 15-20cm deep, plant then either 1 or a group of plants into it. Loosen the roots when taking the plant out of the pot then plant, water the basin area thoroughly and watch the water as it soaks in.
4. Watering, always make sure your plants are planted in a basin as explained, the watering is easier and there should be no loss or run off water. If you are thinking of buying irrigation, then try Drip irrigation. In my view is without a doubt the best form of watering. Drip irrigation gets straight to the root of the plant whereas irrigation sprayers loose around 65% of water through evaporation.

FERTILISING is not recommended for some water wise plants as this encourages new lush growth with less tolerance to drought.



In summary, all is not doom and gloom, we will now be gardening more with nature (yey) not fighting nature. It will be a slow process as not all humans like change, however this has been a long time coming no matter what some of our politicians say!!

So, let us Village Gardens come and help you, myself, Debbie and Karin are full of knowledge and always keen to help, so give us a grow.

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